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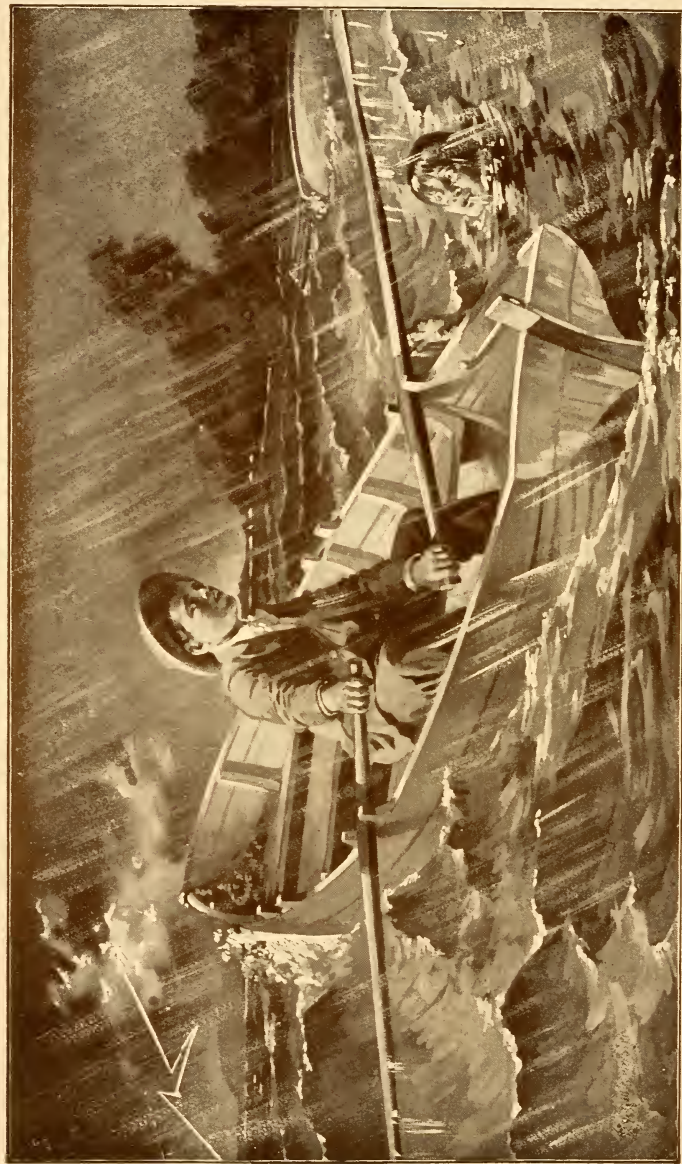
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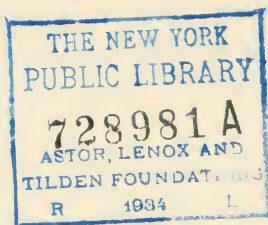
“‘Ah!’ he cried, as the face reappeared close to the stern of his boat. ‘You’re all right, old man; catch hold there.’” (Page 101.)

THE
BEST FOOT FORWARD
AND OTHER STORIES

BY
FRANCIS J. FINN, S.J.
Author of "Percy Wynn," "Tom Playfair,"
"Harry Dee," etc.



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THE BEST FOOT FORWARD.

CHAPTER I.

*IN WHICH THERE IS A CHANGE OF TEACHERS, AND THE
CLASS OF SECOND ACADEMIC FINDS THAT IT
HAS FALLEN UPON DARK DAYS.*

WHEN the boys of Second Academic discovered a new teacher at the desk, they were surprised and bewildered. No wonder they looked at each other with uneasy and inquiring glances; but two weeks of the school-year had passed and all had been going as merry as a marriage bell. What could have happened?

This is what they learned later in the day.

Mr. Phillips had been suddenly called away to a new field of labor; Mr. Phillips, who with much scattering of sunshine had brought them through the class of Third Academic; and who had succeeded in making the past two weeks of the new school-year so bright and pleasant.

The new teacher, on the face of it, was not an

agreeable substitute. He looked appallingly austere, and, what is more, as his young disciples learned long before the first hour of class came to an end, he *was* austere.

"Well, boys," he began, "Mr. Phillips has been called away; and I have been sent here to take his place. I hope we shall get along together. He gives me a more than favorable account of you; but I fear that his great liking for boys has clouded his judgment. Frankly, I am inclined to believe that there never were such boys on the face of the round earth as he describes you to be. If there be any such, they certainly have never fallen under my observation."

Here Tommy Madden burst into a giggle, and several others, suspecting some hidden playfulness in the professor's remarks, smiled amiably. Mr. Roberts' face turned a shade darker, and the furrows on his brow came out in stronger relief.

"I don't want any unseemly levity," he announced glaring at Tommy. That giddy youngster composed his countenance at once, and winked furtively at his particular friend, Harry McCabe.

"Boys," continued Mr. Roberts, "are the strongest evidence we have of original sin."

The listeners took a moment or two to reflect on this difficult saying. The thoughtful silence was

interrupted by another giggle; but the face of its author was not in evidence.

"God in His inscrutable providence," went on the professor, with much earnestness and a decided exhibition of nervousness, "has decreed that for a certain number of years creatures of a non-descript nature that are subsequently to develop into men should vegetate and squirm, and while they are vegetating and squirming and exercising a pernicious activity, the whole world must wait in patience until the thing called a boy ceases to exist, and grows into something valuable, as well for what he performs, as for what he promises. The very best boys are more or less disagreeable in the exhibition of their finest qualities. Of course, we who are older can read between the lines, and discern in their unpleasant traits and unwinning ways the promise of the good there is to be, as in the grub one may detect the promise of the butterfly— See here, you young fellow on the fourth bench to the right, will you stop your fidg-eting? I am sure that you are annoying your bench-mate very much."

"No, sir; he isn't," responded the bench-mate in question. "We've been sitting together ever since—"

"Silence, sir; I shall allow no talking in this class without permission. Now, take out your *Viri*

Romæ; and you, Mr. Giggler,"—here he pointed an ominous finger at Tommy Madden—"will read the first sentence of the day's task."

While Tommy was finding the lesson, his fellow-students were reading the year's disasters in Mr. Roberts' face.

He was older by four or five years than their former beloved teacher. His hair was very thin in front; and, as he put his head close to the printed page after the manner of near-sighted readers, the curious and alert observers noticed a bald spot on the crown, very like, in size and in shape, to the clerical tonsure. His face was thin and sharply drawn, and so rigidly set about the corners of the mouth that an imaginative boy with a sense of humor might wonder whether, in the event of a smile, it might not crack in several places. There were dark circles about his eyes, his complexion was sallow, and he had a trick of compressing his lips which was the nearest thing possible to biting them. All in all, he looked like a man who had suffered much, and laughed little.

In reading the Latin sentence, young Madden made five mistakes in quantity. At each mispronunciation, Mr. Roberts put on the countenance of pained surprise.

"Do you call that reading Latin?" he inquired severely. "That will do, sir; suppose your neighbor tries it."

The neighbor in question was Eddie Miller, the best Latin scholar of the class, and as nice a boy as ever attended Delta College.

Before beginning to read, Eddie tried to smile in a friendly manner at Mr. Roberts. But what with the loss of his much loved teacher, and what with the strange and forbidding ways of the new, Eddie Miller, in common with the rest of the class, had become extremely nervous; accordingly, his smile, instead of being easy, was forced and unnatural. A character reader would have interpreted it as the smile of the heavy villain when he wishes to look particularly scornful and reckless. Whether Mr. Roberts was a reader of character or not remains to be seen; it suffices for our present purpose to know that he read the smile wrong. Eddie had just enough composure left to see that what he had intended as an overture of peace had been received as a hostile and unfriendly demonstration. A new wave of nervousness swept over him. It is not to be wondered at that he said *amavērunt* for *amaverunt*, and that he pronounced *bibere*, as though it belonged to the second conjugation. In the middle of the sentence Miller lost control of his eyesight. The page before him became a blur; then he did the most natural thing under the circumstances—which was also the most ridiculous thing—he burst into a meaningless laugh.

Mr. Roberts screwed his face tight enough, to all appearances, to snap the strings of a violin, sat bolt upright in his chair, and, folding his arms, thus addressed Eddie in particular, and the class in general:

"Although I did not expect you, sir, or any of you, young gentlemen of the class of Second Academic, to correspond very closely to the description given of you by your late teacher, still I looked forward to common politeness, at least in the beginning of our dealings with one another. And now, before I have fairly introduced myself to you, my first remarks are received with giggles, and I am openly insulted by a young gentleman who says *bibere* and *amaverunt*."

Poor Eddie Miller, who during his three years at college had rarely if ever heard a harsh or reproving word from those who had to do with him, here made a silent protest with eyes and shoulders and hands.

"Don't interrupt me, sir." The teacher paused for a moment. The boys sat in the momentary quiet occasioned by dismay and surprise. "You began your reading with a smile of impudence, and ended it with the laugh of insult; and now you are in the sulks."

After his silent protest, Eddie, very red in the face, had lowered his eyes, and was listening with

the most respectful attention. It is not so easy, very often, to distinguish respectful attention from a fit of the sulks, or from covert defiance. Mr. Roberts had fallen into a very natural mistake.

"Suppose you try that sentence," said the teacher to the boy who sat in front of Miller.

When Tony Froller tried to find the place, he wished there was a mountain to fall upon him. A minute passed: for all the success he met with, he might have been looking for a needle in a haystack.

"I—I can't find the place, sir; I believe it's tore out of my book."

To make a long story short, not a single student of Second Academic could be found to read that first sentence correctly, and all in consequence were ordered to report after class. The worst had come, and with the worst the nervous terror was over. A short time often brings about marvellous changes. Before the end of the second hour, the spitball made its first appearance in that class; and during the afternoon, the "nigger-shooter," and several breaches of order hitherto unknown foreboded that the golden age was over and gone forever.

CHAPTER II.

*IN WHICH EDDIE MILLER TELLS HIS TALE OF WOE, AND
RECEIVES, IN RETURN, AN ASTONISHING REVE-
LATION FROM HIS OLDER BROTHER.*

IN all his experience with young people, the writer of this veracious chronicle has met with but one Eddie Miller. Had he not met him, it is not at all unlikely that he would have pronounced Eddie the very last thing in the way of a possible boy. Having met him, however, he is compelled to admit that his like is rarely found. Still, were it not for Eddie, this story would not be worth the writing, and, if written, would be far less satisfactory in its conclusion.

With more than average gifts of mind, Eddie was a lad of no little tact. He said and did the right thing at the right time. Furthermore, he was exceedingly good-natured, and, at the same time, unselfish—qualities of character which are found in conjunction by no means so often as is popularly supposed. His extreme kindness may be judged from the fact that none of his playmates had ever heard him utter an uncharitable or bitter word against any human being. When his companions were in trouble or distress, they were wont to confide their woes to him, and, such was the

power of his sympathy, they never departed unconsolated.

No matter whither Miller went, he was always in good company; for bad boys changed, for the time being, their natures when within reach of his direct influence. He seemed to carry about with him an atmosphere of sunshine and cheerfulness. He judged others at their best, and, by a sort of responsive instinct, others showed him their best. So ingenious was his charity in the kindly interpretation of others' sayings and doings, that he explained away what was, on the face of it, wrong or mean with a seeming subtlety, which was in effect the highest and noblest form of simplicity. True kindness is the deadly foe of sin; and I have no doubt that young Miller exercised an influence for good which was almost apostolic. Briefly, his was a large, a noble, and a religious nature. In his manner of dealing with others he was the very opposite of his new teacher. Mr. Roberts appeared to expect the very worst of human nature; and he got exactly what he expected. Eddie looked for the best, and he was seldom disappointed.

Just turned thirteen, he was rather stout, with a ruddy, smiling, good-natured face, and clear, gray eyes, which looked straight into yours with the frank gaze which is the prerogative of innocent and unstained youth. He was heavily, almost

clumsily built; and, though fairly good in games—by reason of his strength, which atoned, in a measure, for his want of agility—he was hardly superior in this respect to the average college boy of his years. But as a scholar and a leader he was easily the best of all the junior students. The heights of noble simplicity are equivalently the heights of subtlety; and no boy politician—how great soever his diplomancy—could have hoped to exert the powerful influence of Eddie Miller. His face, as the attentive reader may have already gathered, wore, in general, an expression of cheerfulness; but at supper on the evening of the eventful day when Mr. Roberts assumed charge of the Second Academic class, he looked pensive and troubled.

When there is question of her own child, very, very little indeed escapes the attention of the mother.

“What’s the matter, Eddie?” Mrs. Miller inquired.

“Oh, nothing very much, mother; things are a little upset.”

“That’s no reason why you should not eat your supper, Eddie,” continued the mother. “My little boy will become ill, if he allows things to trouble him so far as to take away his appetite.”

"I suppose your invincible baseball team has been beaten," put in his brother James.

"No; it's not that. I wish it was. I could stand the loss of a game well enough. But it's worse. Our old teacher who prepared us for our first communion and who was so kind to all of us has been called away. Every fellow in the class feels bad about it. I don't think there was a single one of us who didn't like him immensely."

Mr. and Mrs. Miller received this bit of news with expressions of genuine sorrow; James and the younger children with perfect indifference.

"And who has taken Mr. Phillips' place?" asked the father.

"He's a new man—his name is Mr. Roberts."

At the mention of this name, James Miller gave a perceptible start. His face flushed; he was on the point of uttering an exclamation; but restraining himself, he lifted his teacup to his lips, and concealed as best he could his emotion. His mother alone noticed that he had been startled.

"Mr. Roberts, Mr. Roberts," repeated Mr. Miller; "it strikes me that I have heard that name before."

"He was my teacher at St. Bruno's the last year I was there," observed James with the least little quiver in his voice. He spoke in a low tone. The words were not intended for the ears of Eddie.

Mother and father looked at each other meaningly; there came an awkward pause. Eddie had intended to say nothing further; but the sudden silence drove him into speech.

"I'm afraid," he continued, "that there's going to be a lot of trouble in the class; and I guess that's what makes me feel so out of sorts. You see, nearly the whole crowd of us made our first communion last year, and since that time a lot of us have been going to communion nearly every week regularly. We have all of us kept together, and on Saturday after school, we go off together to the church to confession. But this afternoon only three or four went. The others were too cross, and said they didn't feel in the humor for going. Mr. Roberts doesn't show that he likes boys. In fact, he talks as if he had no use for them at all. But then the boys don't seem to like him, for that matter; and perhaps it's our own fault. Perhaps it's because we're in bad humor, and not used to his ways. Some of the fellows played some pretty queer tricks in the class-room this afternoon. I don't think they intended to be mean; but they didn't seem to act like themselves at all. It looks now as if our class was going to pieces, and up to this time we've had a splendid reputation, and we have always thought that we were the banner class of the college."

"I hope," said Mr. Miller gravely, "that my boy will not fall into line with the rest of the class, in the event of its 'going to pieces,' and that he will stand up for what he knows to be right."

"I'll try to, father; but I'm a little afraid that I'll find it hard to get along with him nicely. He gave me a scolding to-day, though I didn't quite see why. He seemed to think that I was impudent. It was a mistake, though; for I never dreamed of doing such a thing. All the same, I don't blame him in the least. You see, I got rattled, and, when he asked me the lesson, I read the Latin wrong, and lost my head, and acted awfully foolish. The harder I tried, the worse I got; and I ended by breaking out into the stupidest kind of a laugh. He spoke crossly to me. I wonder why it is that a fellow doesn't like a man who speaks crossly to him for a day or two after? That's the way I feel now. But I reckon it will be over to-morrow."

"The reason is very simple, my boy," the father made answer. "Human nature is a very lovely thing; but it isn't altogether lovely. It is dosed too heavily with original sin. Those feelings of vexation are perfectly natural, but not altogether creditable. Fight against them, and don't go to bed with the least bit of dislike for your new teacher."

"Thank you, father; I'll try."

When supper was over, James took Eddie by the arm, and drawing him aside, said in a mysterious whisper:

"Slip up quietly to my room, Eddie, I want to see you about something."

When Eddie entered James' bedroom a few minutes later, he was surprised to find his brother seated with his face buried in his hands.

"What's the matter, James? Even before I saw your face, I could tell by the way you were sitting that you were awfully solemn." As James raised his head, he added, "Good gracious! you look as pale as a ghost."

The elder brother did not answer promptly. Apparently, he was trying with doubtful success to swallow something.

"Got something stuck in your throat?" asked Eddie, anxiously. "Suppose I hit you over the back. That will fetch it."

For answer, James broke into a laugh; and with the laugh much of the strain and agitation under which he had been laboring disappeared.

"I was trying to swallow something, Eddie; but not what you thought. I was trying to swallow my feelings; and I think I have succeeded. Now, Ed, I'm going to tell you something about myself that's been kept a secret from you ever since it

happened. It was my hope and desire that you should never know it. But that hope is gone; and, whether I like it or not, I feel that I ought to tell it, both for your sake and my own."

Eddie became as solemn as a judge. His brother had never spoken to him thus seriously within his farthest remembrance.

"You needn't be alarmed, though. Let me begin from the beginning. Why don't you sit down? Well," he went on, as Eddie seated himself, "as you may remember, I attended St. Bruno's for nearly three years; and I can honestly say that when I began my third year there, I was not at all a bad boy, and what little influence I did exercise among my college friends was, at all events, not for evil. It was in that year that Mr. Roberts became my teacher."

"What! Our Mr. Roberts?" cried Eddie, almost jumping from his chair.

"If it weren't he," answered James with a sickly smile, "I wouldn't be telling you this story. Perhaps you never would have heard it. Well, I was a pretty lively boy, and so it came to pass that one thing or another that I did out of sheer thoughtlessness was misunderstood by Mr. Roberts. He got it into his head that I was trying to annoy him. As a matter of fact I did annoy him considerably; but, then, as is often the case with thoughtless

boys, I had no intention of doing so; and in reality was not thinking of him at all. At first, when he called me to account, I tried to see things the way he saw them, and submit nicely. I must say, too, that although he was mistaken as regards my intentions, he was otherwise kind and reasonable. I think that we would have gotten on very well together, had it not been for two or three boys in my class. They managed, just at this time, to get my confidence, and then they did everything in their power to set me against Mr. Roberts. The worst of it is, they succeeded; and soon they persuaded me to think that Mr. Roberts was down on me. That settled it. Then, of course, I began to grow sore and suspicious and narrow. Next, the one topic of my spare time was my grievances. I began to go around with the hang-dog air which the college tough affects; and very soon every bit of influence which I possessed went for evil. Well, the end of it was that the entire class, with scarcely an exception, went wrong; and I was the ringleader, and, in consequence, was dismissed from college."

"Is that so, James?"

"It's the one bitter memory of my life. My dismissal meant more to me than you can imagine, Eddie. I was not a good boy when I left in disgrace; I believe that as a rule no boy in a Catholic school can be what he ought to be, if he has a

strong feeling of dislike towards his teacher, and allows himself to be guided by such a feeling. For a year or so after leaving school, I went about like a bear with a sore head. Everything at that time promised my turning out a sour, useless, growling, good-for-nothing fellow. And still during this period I could not forget, in spite of everything I did, that, before I got under the influence of those fellows who made a cat's-paw of me, I had had the idea of becoming a priest. Indeed, I was hesitating between the priesthood and the religious life, when the ugly part of me began to assert itself. The remembrance of this soured me all the more. Well, there's no use in crying over spilt milk. I tell you this to make you understand how I feel now in looking back over those ugly days. It is all over and past now. I came to my senses after a while—through my mother, Eddie, and through—but that's a matter which I need not speak about. And now that three years have passed since my dismissal, I see only too clearly how unjust and unkind I was to Mr. Roberts. It was chiefly owing to my leadership that the class he taught showed him every imaginable manner of meanness. I have since learned that when Mr. Roberts came to St. Bruno's, he had to deal with boys for the first time, and that he has had nothing to do with them since. After leaving St.

Bruno's he was engaged in entirely different work. I suspect, too, that the reason for his giving up class-work was owing to his health; the year with me and the others almost ruined his health. Now, you begin to understand, Eddie, why it is that he thinks so little of boys."

"Yes, indeed," Eddie made answer. "I'm afraid that I have judged him very rashly. I'll be more careful next time. No wonder, James, that he doesn't trust us yet."

"Oh, if you only knew the way we treated him," returned the elder brother earnestly, "you would hardly think it possible that he would ever trust boys again. It was not the ordinary, the unorganized meanness of boys he had to suffer from; our conduct was practically conducted on the plan of a conspiracy, which made it a thousand times worse than it could be if it were a go-as-you-please affair. The treatment he got from us was something awful. It makes me feel mean to this day whenever I get to thinking of it. Till I came to hating Mr. Roberts, I had no idea how much meanness was in me. Now, Eddie, I can never begin to make any sort of reparation for what I have done; but you can help me, and, in a way, take my place. If you are willing to do what you can, you will do me the greatest favor I could ask of you, and, at the same time, you will avoid the danger I fell into.

I used all my influence to spread evil; you must make up for me by using your influence for good. Stand by your teacher, Ed; don't get into the sulks; don't become a growler and a sore-head; keep your temper first and last and all the time, and—and—it will be a good thing all around."

These last words did not exactly convey the thought which James was minded to utter; but being of the masculine gender, he yielded to the masculine reticence, and indicated by his manner the thought and feelings which he had not the courage to express in language.

Eddie was deeply moved—more so than he cared to show.

"I'm going to act on your advice, James, and I'm very glad you spoke to me about this affair. Perhaps I should have fallen into line with the other fellows, if you hadn't told me your story. But now I'm quite sure that I will keep my temper and not become ugly and uncharitable. If Mr. Roberts doesn't get along with the class it won't be my fault."

CHAPTER III.

*IN WHICH ARE SET DOWN MINUTELY THE TRIALS AND
TRIBULATIONS OF MASTER CYRIL HARMON, SHOWING
THAT SUCCESS IS SOMETIMES DEARLY BOUGHT;
AND IN WHICH EDDIE MILLER FINDS THAT
HIS OWN POPULARITY STANDS IN
THE WAY OF HIS PERSONAL
INFLUENCE.*

IN the first weeks of the school-year, the Second Academic gave every promise of remaining true to its record, and of being, whether in lessons or in conduct, the model class of the college. Before the end of September, it had lost its fair name and belied its promises; while many of its members had so far declined upon a lower level as to be rated among the most troublesome students of Delta College. And this marked deterioration, I am sorry to say, was not confined to studies and discipline. Not only had idleness and meanness slipped in, but carelessness in religious duties and practices had become painfully apparent. Few of the class remained faithful to their habit of frequent confession and communion; several ceased to attend the meetings of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, and others were on the point of taking their names from the list of membership. Yet there had been a time when the Sodality Director could

count with certainty upon the attendance of the entire class. To make matters worse, divisions had arisen among the boys, and, in consequence, there had crept in grumbling, envy and jealousy.

Eddie Miller was no longer the leader; in fact there was no leader. The boys had split up into little cliques. Had Eddie sided with the great majority in condemning Mr. Roberts, his mastery of the situation would have been assured; but it would have been a mastery which would have been unto evil. As it was, his uncompromising loyalty to his teacher cost him the confidence, if not the respect, of more than two-thirds of his classmates. The breach, small though it was in the beginning, gave promise of widening with the progress of the school-year.

But there was another and a more serious cause of disunion. Among the students in Second Academic was a quiet, neat, tidy lad named Cyril Harmon. Cyril was neither a man's boy nor a boy's boy. Some women and a few men of a certain temperament would have been charmed with him; for in addition to good moral traits he was sedate, serious, not given to games that involved any sort of roughness, and always neatly dressed.

A legend circulated among his classmates to the effect that he had never yet worn out a single suit

of clothes, but had simply outgrown them. Others boldly stated that once when he had left the class with a scared face and on the plea of sickness, it had all been due to a hole in his stocking, which, being something new and unimagined in his experience, had terrified him beyond measure.

It gave the entire class infinite delight to watch him dust his seat before occupying it. It was claimed that he always used the same handkerchief, which, nevertheless, as he drew it from his pocket, was ever clean and neatly folded.

Another rumor had it that young Cyril kept a collection of dolls at home, each of them arrayed with a splendor which might have put to shame Solomon in all his glory. These dresses, it was asserted with perfect seriousness, were basted and sewed and what not by Master Cyril himself, whose skill in work of that kind was recognized to such an extent in his own neighborhood that his girl acquaintances came to him with their dolls, as the elders, their mammas, went to the "Ladies' Merchant Tailor." Tommy Madden was authority for the statement that Cyril was so skilled in the uses of the skipping rope as to be able to "read the Bible."

Now young Harmon, in the eyes of the new teacher, was the oasis in the Sahara of the Second Academic. He was publicly praised for his man-

ners, his neatness, and his gentle ways. Thenceforth the poor little lad found it difficult to get along at all. With the exception of Eddie Miller and a few who were still faithful to their former leader, all set their faces against him. He was treated roughly at every opportunity. Previously he had encountered the merest toleration; but now he was persecuted, and those who ventured to sympathize with him were looked upon as milk-sops. In vain did Eddie Miller do everything that the ingenuity of his tact could devise to soften the lot of Cyril Harmon; he failed signally, and in the failing lost part of his own influence. Day after day the boys went on from unkindness to unkindness, from meanness to meanness. And yet, as Eddie stoutly maintained in the face of appearances, they were, every one of them, really kind-hearted and well-intentioned.

On the first of October the class was more disorderly than usual—which is saying a great deal. The floor was littered with paper and rubbish. The spitball and those little paper pellets which supply the ordinary ammunition for the treacherous rubber shooter were in plentiful evidence. Tommy Madden was particularly and pertinaciously active in the forenoon, and contributed much towards giving Master Cyril Harmon several particularly bad quarters of an hour. To protect

his innocent neck, the poor victim of young Madden's attentions pulled up the collar of his coat, and bent his head till nothing of it could be seen from behind save a stray lock of hair which had been won from its accustomed place by the tousling hand of his bench-mate. Not content with these measures for his personal security, Cyril used his arm as a wall to screen that side of his face which was within shooting range of the indefatigable Tommy. This young gentleman, however, was by no means alone in the work of promoting disorder; an able following of mischief-makers lent him valuable support. Mr. Roberts, looking very worn and weary, devoted himself more particularly to checking the open outbreaks of Madden, but in vain; Tommy would not down. The unhappy teacher, who certainly was honest and outspoken, had within the past two weeks proclaimed more than once in no uncertain terms that Madden was by all odds the most troublesome boy he had ever met. On this particular morning, he repeated the remark with a few intensifying variations.

In the afternoon, there came something of a lull. Tommy had become strangely quiet; and Cyril Harmon once more turned down the collar of his coat, and rested his hands peacefully upon the desk. As the hour went on, Mr. Roberts suddenly grew uneasy. A calm so intensely tropical

gave promise of a storm. Instinctively, he cast a glance at Madden. The boy's eye was dull; his face very pale, and the habitual grin had utterly disappeared. A look of concern came upon the teacher's face. For a moment the stern lines and the set expression softened with kindness.

"Come here, Tommy," he said in a voice that was at once low and sympathetic.

Tommy came forward with the walk of one whose feet are uncertain. He was pointed one way and going another, like a rowboat crossing a swift current.

The boys failed to notice the humor of Tommy's progress; they had become intensely quiet. There was a note in the teacher's voice which had never before fallen upon their ears.

Mr. Roberts touched Tom's forehead lightly, then caught his wrist.

"Do you feel any pain, my poor boy? I'm afraid you're ill. What's the matter?"

"I don't know what it is, sir. I've a queer feeling in my back, like it was inger-rubber; and I'm dizzy and sick to my stomach."

Placing a protecting arm about the lad, Mr. Roberts, apparently oblivious of the class, helped him gently, almost tenderly, out of the room.

As the footfalls in the passage without died away, pandemonium should have ensued; but it

didn't. There was a dead silence. In the midst of it, Eddie Miller arose. He was trembling, and as pale as Tommy.

"Look here, fellows; I've got something that I want to say. I've been wanting to say it for some time; but somehow, I couldn't get the right chance very often, and when I did get it, somehow or other I couldn't say it."

"Go ahead." "Go on, Eddie." "Don't be afraid." "You're all right," were the various exclamations of encouragement which greeted Eddie's somewhat awkward address.

"Well—I don't want to preach: it's not in my line; so don't take me wrong from the start. Boys, I want to say a word in favor of Mr. Roberts."

There was a murmur of surprise.

"I don't think that we have been quite fair to him so far, and it's about time for us to do a little better."

Something like a hiss was heard.

"Drop it," growled one. "Sit down," added another with good-natured brusqueness.

"But look, boys," pleaded Miller gaining courage in the face of opposition; "we have all of us just seen that Mr. Roberts is a good deal kinder than any of us thought he was. Perhaps we've been too ugly to give him a chance that way. If he had been Tommy Madden's own mother, he couldn't

have been any nicer to him than he was just now: and Tommy hasn't been so very kind to him either."

The boys exchanged doubtful glances. Eddie's pleading still hung in a doubtful balance.

"If he has been a little stiff with us," continued Eddie quickly, "you will understand from what I'm going to tell you that he acted about the way any of us would have acted, if we had been in his shoes. The last time he had anything to do with boys before he came here, he had to deal with a very hard crowd, and they were pretty ugly with him. They were just fierce, and never gave him a fair chance. They made it up among themselves to do everything wrong. The end of it was that the whole class went to pieces, and some of the boys in it were expelled from college. I know this, because I got it from my brother who went to school at that college, and was in Mr. Roberts' class. That was the only time that Mr. Roberts ever had anything to do with boys at school, and he came here remembering how he had been treated. And, now, fellows—honest—have we done anything to change that opinion of his?"

There was a moment's silence: the boys were not quite convinced.

"*You* have," cried one, and his words were taken up, and repeated by the others.

"No; I'm afraid I haven't. But anyhow, he judges us as a crowd. And now look at the way things are. We aren't the same crowd we used to be. In the beginning of this school-year and all last year we were all the best kind of friends; and now some of the fellows won't so much as look at each other, much less talk together. Then again, we're not getting on in our studies the way we used to, and the honest fact of the matter is that pretty much all of us have changed for the worse—I know for one that I have."

"No, no," came from many: "*You're* all right."

"And even if you're not," one of the older boys of the class observed, "it's his fault."

"I know that I'm changed for the worse," replied Ed to the last speaker; "but it is no fault of Mr. Roberts'; it's my own; and unless I make a new start, it will go from worse to worse. But I want you all to help me. You see—"

Just then the door opened, and Mr. Roberts entered. Had Eddie been caught in a crime, he could not have looked more guilty. The teacher gazed at him for some moments in great indignation.

"Go to your seat, sir," he said in his most peremptory tone.

Alas for Eddie Miller! After all, he was only human. Like the rest of us, he was born in a state

of original sin. But a second before he had been counseling respect and obedience; now he himself gave the example of insubordination. He colored to the roots of his hair, and, flashing a defiant look at Mr. Roberts, he returned to his place with his head very high, and with the first evidence of a pout that any of his classmates had ever seen upon his usually cheerful face.

Mr. Roberts grew angrier; his face-twitched, and his voice became strangely altered, as he said further:

"Miller, I'm astonished at you. You have not only been out of order, but you have had the impudence to resent being called to account. Come to me after class. Do you understand me, sir?"

"Yes, sir," answered Eddie with perfect respect. The poor fellow—such was his mastery over himself—already repented of his burst of temper. He was ashamed and sorry; the more so as he realized in a flash that all had seen his peevishness, and—worst of all—had sympathized with him.

"I was not so foolish," continued Mr. Roberts, "as to expect you boys to keep perfect order in my absence; but I *did* think that you would have sense enough to keep your places."

Even had Eddie Miller not given the example of insubordination, these few remarks would have been enough to destroy the effect of the boy's

speech. Not only had his words gone for nothing, but the present state of affairs was worse than before. With the exception of Cyril Harmon, there was now not a single boy who was not set against the teacher. Because Eddie was so loved, his undertaking failed. Oh, if he could but recall that little outburst of temper! But it was too late, and the evil was done.

Had he taken Mr. Roberts' first correction in a spirit of submission, Miller might have explained the misunderstanding; but as it was, he felt guilty; and accordingly spent an hour after class in committing to memory forty lines of English verse.

CHAPTER IV.

*IN WHICH EDDIE MILLER TAKES COUNSEL OF FATHER
NOLAND, AND LEARNS A FEW THINGS
WORTH REMEMBERING.*

INSTEAD of going home at once, Eddie, upon reciting his penance, paid a visit to his friend and confessor, Father Noland. This good and venerable man had devoted his life to the welfare of boys, and even in his declining days, his sympathy for them was as undulled as it had been when he was in his prime. Age and infirmity kept him from going about much; but even in his room he was

able to bring his boys around him, and to aid and direct them safely through temptation and trial.

"Welcome, Eddie; I am glad to see you. Take a seat, and tell me your little trouble."

"Who told you I was in trouble, Father? Did you hear what happened in class this afternoon?"

"Oh, it was a class affair, was it? No; I didn't hear of anything; but, at the same time, though my eyes are not so sharp as they used to be, they can see a little yet. Your face tells me that something has gone wrong. You look discouraged; I do not remember to have ever seen you in that dangerous state of mind before."

"Well, Father, I do feel rather out of sorts. I guess I've got what they call the blues, although I didn't know what the word meant a few weeks ago. But I don't see exactly where the dangerous state comes in."

"Yet it does come in all the same, my boy. As a matter of fact, sadness generally makes people weaker to resist temptation. God doesn't want us to be out of sorts. We should look upon an inclination to fret and worry as a sort of temptation in itself. But you didn't come here to hear me philosophizing. You want to tell me your story, or some of it; and I want to send you home comforted and smiling, like your own self. Next to fighting sin, I think that the best thing a man can

do is to take up the cudgels against discouragement. So go ahead, my boy."

"I suppose you know, sir, that things have not been going any too well in our class since Mr. Phillips went away, and Mr. Roberts took his place?"

"Indeed! I must say that I suspected as much. In fact, I heard some remarks from one or two in your class some time ago, which pointed that way. That was just after the change was made. For the last week or two your class hardly comes near me. Of course, Eddie, *you* get on with Mr. Roberts, don't you?"

"I'm sorry to say, Father, that I do not; and to-day I made an awful break. The funniest thing about it is that it happened just while I was trying to work for him. He had left the class for a few moments, and I took the chance—the boys, you see, happened to feel a little more kindly towards him than usual—to try and bring them round a little. While I was talking, he came in. Of course I was out of order. He spoke to me pretty roughly, and somehow or another, before I knew it, I lost my temper, and acted as if I didn't care what he thought about me. I was sorry right away; but I had spoiled everything, and I feel more ashamed of myself than I ever did before. My trying to get the boys into better humor was the

worst failure I ever made. The fellows are now more set against him than they were before. But I'm afraid I'm going ahead too fast; I've begun at the end of my story instead of at the beginning. If I'm not taking up too much of your time—"

"Nonsense, my boy! You are welcome to all the time I have, and if we run out of that, we may try to borrow some one else's. Just begin from the beginning, and tell me everything. The better I understand the state of affairs, the better shall I be able to help you."

Without malice, without omission, and helped to completeness of detail by an occasional question from Father Noland, Eddie gave a good account of the Second Academic class as it had been before Mr. Roberts' arrival, and as it was at that moment. He also narrated at length the conversation which he had held with his brother James, and informed Father Noland of the promise he had given on that occasion.

"And now, Father," he concluded, "you see how I tried to carry out that resolution to-day, and what a dismal failure it was. I tried to get the boys on my side, so as to bring them over to the teacher's side; and I did bring them over, but not in the right way. The more they like me, the more they are down on Mr. Roberts. If I try to say anything in his favor, they will begin growling

about the way he treated me. Unless there's some sort of a change among us fellows, we'll all become a lot of hoodlums."

Father Noland arose, and took several turns about the room. He was absorbed in thought. At length, he resumed his chair, and addressed himself to Eddie.

"You don't know, Eddie, how much your story has interested me. It would have set me thinking, even if you had not told me about that talk with your brother. I'm very glad that you didn't leave that part out; for if I can give you any help at all, it will chiefly be from the light which your brother's story has thrown upon the subject. His story reminds me of something that happened when I was a boy at college. Among the students was one who was a very dear friend of mine. He was the most variously gifted boy I have ever come across, and that is saying a great deal. He was also very modest, and, while full of fun, quite religious. One day it was his lot to appear in public and deliver an elocutionary selection. He came upon the stage gracefully, made a nice bow, and began his lines so nicely that we all felt we were going to enjoy a great treat. Presently—it was a slip of the tongue, I believe—he made a mispronunciation. The blunder was rather laughable. There was a titter; the poor fellow heard it, and

became confused. He began to balk and stumble. There was more laughing. But even that stopped when the boys saw that he had lost his head completely. In the midst of a dead silence he stood there trying to remember his lines; but his mind had become a blank. Finally, he left the stage, smarting under the first great humiliation that had ever darkened his days at college."

"That was pretty rough," was Miller's comment. "Didn't they have a prompter?"

"Prompter! Had the whole faculty been shouting the words into the poor fellow's ears, he would not have been able to go on. Well, from that day and until he left school, you could not get him to appear in public. He continued as before to lead his class; he continued as before, to be beyond all doubt the most accomplished boy in the college; but no inducement could prevail on him to appear in public. After college, he became a member of a great religious order. He made long and serious studies with the success that had been with him at college. He became a great theologian and, at the same time, a man of eminent culture. His influence over people *individually* was something extraordinary. Yet, whenever he attempted to address a multitude, all power seemed to go out from him at once. As an orator, he was an utter failure. Had he been able to talk with any degree of flu-

ency in public, his power for good, great as it actually was, would have been a hundredfold greater, and he would have been, I doubt not, one of the greatest and most famous priests in the West. Now I have sometimes thought, in the light of later experiences, that he might have been saved as a speaker if he had been taken in time."

"What a pity he wasn't, Father. But how could he have been saved?"

"I found out the means of curing such cases at a convent entertainment some years ago. The different numbers of the programme for the first hour or so had all been carried out creditably, when a young lady appeared on the stage to deliver a rather lengthy narrative poem. She spoke with fluency and vivacity, and gave promise of making the hit of the afternoon. Suddenly her memory failed her. Although there were over a thousand people in the hall, you could have heard a pin drop as she came to that awkward pause. The embarrassed audience seemed to be holding its breath, Meanwhile, the poor girl fastened her eyes on the floor, smiled deprecatingly, then frowned, and flushed with mortification; but nothing would come, and the prompter was not at hand. At last she could bear the situation no longer and turning, she hastened off the stage. As she crossed towards the wing, I noticed that it was all she could

do to repress a sob. Well, the programme was continued in regular order, and we were all trying to forget the failure, when, suddenly and unannounced, she appeared on the stage again. Of course, she was received with a round of applause. She deserved it; for she was about to undertake a plucky thing. She not only began her recitation over, but she went on from beginning to end without a moment of hesitation, acquitted herself superbly, and left the stage the heroine of the day. Doubtless, one of the good Sisters who understood her thoroughly had induced her to make the venture a second time. It was a risky thing to advise; but it was a case of kill or cure; and in this case it resulted in a perfect cure. The girl is now one of the best elocutionists in her native town. Often since have I thought that if my friend had been induced to try his piece again, and if he had tried it successfully, his whole life would have been other than what it was. Instead of being an orator as he should have been, the very thought of appearing to address a large audience was enough to throw him into extreme nervousness."

"That's so, Father," assented Miller.

"Well, to return to the real point: how does all this bear upon Mr. Roberts' case? So far we have been talking about stage fright; but don't you see, Eddie, that besides stage fright there may be other

kinds of frights? Now your teacher, I believe, has contracted a bad case of boy fright. The treatment he received at St. Bruno's was simply outrageous."

"My brother has told me over and over again," interrupted Eddie, "that it is almost impossible to exaggerate the meanness of himself and his crowd towards Mr. Roberts."

"At all events," resumed Father Noland, "it has resulted in affecting the nerves of Mr. Roberts, it may be, for life. I knew Mr. Roberts when he was a little boy at college, and he was certainly a bright and agreeable youngster, very good-natured; but, if anything, a trifle too open in speaking out the thing he thought. He was the soul of honor. Evidently, his experiences at St. Bruno's have had a very sad effect upon him. He labors under the impression that boys—college boys—as a class, are evil, unkind, rude, vulgar, dishonest, and unworthy of being trusted; and true to his character, he does not hesitate to say what he thinks. It would be unlike Mr. Roberts to think one thing and say another."

"I've noticed that he always says just what he thinks," said Miller. "But, Father, isn't it a pity that he has such an idea of us boys? Why *all* boys are good—at least," he added, as he noticed the

smile on Father Noland's face, "all the boys that go to this college."

"Well, whether they are or not, the fact remains that while the boys in your class are much better than Mr. Roberts gives them credit for being, still they are not angels, and by no means half so good as they thought they were."

Miller caught his breath with astonishment.

"You are surprised, are you? Why, your own account shows that your class has acted in a most disappointing way. Mr. Roberts had hardly entered the room when you boys began to cut up; and you have kept it up steadily ever since. Previously you were well behaved because you liked and respected Mr. Phillips. The fact that you changed your conduct with the change of teachers shows that you were not acting entirely on principle."

"It seems to me, Father, that I would never have lost my temper in dealing with my old teacher; and now that you speak of the matter, I feel more and more that we have been anything but fair to Mr. Roberts."

"Worse than that, Eddie, you have not been fair to yourselves. We are apt to judge of people as they show themselves to us. Now Mr. Roberts has seen the very worst side of you boys all along;

no wonder, then, that he has an unfavorable opinion of you. Now, tell me frankly, Eddie, have you and your class gone out of the way in the least to show your teacher your good side?"

"No, sir; I believe not."

"Have you any reason to think that anything that you and your class have done since he took charge of you is calculated to give him a favorable idea of boys?"

"That's a fact," said Eddie, rubbing his hands through his hair. "We haven't done a thing when he was around that showed him the least sign of what is good in us."

"Now, Ed, you have a high opinion of the boys in your class. Wouldn't it be a splendid thing if we could get Mr. Roberts to think as well of them as you and I do?"

"I'd do anything in the world, Father, if I could succeed in that."

"The great question is how to go about it."

"Is there any way, Father?"

"Perhaps; let me put my thinking cap on for a few minutes."

Father Noland, accordingly, put his "thinking cap" on—that is, he arose from his chair, and, with his hands behind his back, began pacing up and down the room. Suddenly, he made a stop directly in front of his visitor, and for fully half a

minute stared that young gentleman full in the face. But as far as any expression of recognition was concerned, Eddie might have been on the other side of the globe. As suddenly as he had stopped, he resumed his walk. After a few turns the look of perplexity which had been so long fixed upon his countenance vanished; a happy smile took its place, and he exclaimed half aloud, "I've got it."

"Eddie," he began, as he resumed his chair, "do you know that you have a great deal of influence among the boys of the Second Academic class?"

"A little, Father; but not one-tenth so much as people think I have."

"Call it little or call it great—of one thing I am sure: you have much more influence than the average boy, much more probably than you have any idea of."

"All the same, Father, I cannot do anything with them on this point. Even the fellows who like me a good deal won't listen to me when I try to say anything about our teacher."

"That's because you haven't gone about it in the right way. But you need not lose courage: the battle is not over yet; and you have to do a deal of fighting before it's won. Eddie, I'm going to give you the hardest job you ever tried to manage. It's a very hard job, indeed. I should never have thought of suggesting it to you, if I had not

known how strong your influence was for good. Even taking that into consideration, I cannot promise success. But if it does turn out well, God alone knows how much good it will do."

"I'll do anything you say, Father."

"Well, here's the state of the case: Your teacher came here with his faith in the goodness of boy-nature considerably shaken. The treatment which he received from the students at St. Bruno's has wrought upon his nerves in such a way that he is in a morbid condition on that one point. Since his arrival here, your class has acted in anything but a creditable manner. Instead of showing their best they have shown their worst side to him, and have, accordingly, confirmed him in his prejudices against the small boy. Now, you must set to work, and get the boys of your class to show him their best selves, and to put the best foot forward."

"I, Father?"

"Not you alone, but you and all the boys in your class."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand, Father."

"You must act as you all acted when Mr. Phillips was your teacher. If you do that for some time, he will come to see you as you really are. Do you understand? You must force yourselves, for some time, perhaps, to show what is best and noblest in you. Of course, in the present state of

affairs, this will be no easy task. What you did spontaneously for Mr. Phillips, you must now do with effort, and by means of organization. In other words, you must go about the thing systematically."

"Oh, I see the idea now—at least in a vague way. But what do you mean by saying that I must go about the thing systematically?"

"This: you must do for the sake of good exactly what your brother and his companions at St. Bruno's did for the sake of evil. You must all of you band together for this one purpose. In order to get the boys to do this, you must take them one at a time. If you begin with the crowd, as you did in your attempt this afternoon, you are sure to fail. Start first with those over whom you have most influence; and get them to make other converts. If you are to succeed, you must bring over the entire class."

"That's a great idea," cried Eddie with enthusiasm. "Oh, if I can only manage to work it!"

"If you go about it in the right way there is every reason why you should hope. Now as to ways and means of showing what is best in you, I leave that to yourselves. If you once take up the idea, you will find devising ways and means as interesting almost as a game. So, now, my boy, go on, and make your first converts, and then lay

your heads together. Don't lose courage. The difference between the man who succeeds and the man who fails is that the one doesn't give in (if he gives in at all) until he's sure that he's beaten, while the other loses courage before the battle is fairly begun."

"Thank you, Father. Won't you please help us as much as you can?"

"I'll remember you all in a special way in my prayers. If I knew of any better help than prayer, I would give it to you. It's worth praying for, and all of you must pray as well as work. Of course, I will expect you to come in occasionally and tell me how things are getting on. Now remember—the best foot forward. Good-by, Eddie, and may God bless you."

CHAPTER V.

*IN WHICH TOMMY MADDEN TAKES A PRONOUNCED STAND
AND, BY EXTRAORDINARY MEANS, MAKES AN
EXTRAORDINARY CONVERSION TO THE
SIDE OF LAW AND ORDER.*

ON leaving Father Noland's room, Eddie thought himself of Tommy Madden. As prefect of the Junior Sodality, Eddie followed the gracious and pious custom of visiting all sodalists in time of illness. Fifteen minutes later, he was seated be-

side Tommy, who with a towel wrapped about his forehead, and a blanket about his body, lay, the picture of desolation, in bed.

Madden was too sick to smile. His face grew pathetic as he described the pains which were racking his body. As he had never been sick abed since the fourth year of his interesting existence, he took his little trouble quite seriously. Miller, unconsciously, it may be, realized the situation, and proceeded to divert Thomas from the consideration of his ailments. He told him with pleasing details all about the last game between the Detroit and the Milwaukee clubs; and before he had reached the fifth inning Madden was sitting up in bed, his eyes shining, and his tousled hair rising in irregular ridges above the solemn towel which obscured his brow. When Miller came to the great double play in the seventh, Madden pulled the towel off, and sent it straight at the head of the family cat, who, frightened and indignant, tumbled out of the room, taking the towel with her.

Had the cat been the greatest of clowns, she could not have been more ridiculous. The two roared with laughter, as, with what looked suspiciously like a double back somersault, she disappeared through the doorway.

"How's your headache?" asked Miller abruptly.

"What headache?—Oh!" cried Tom, suddenly

recollecting himself. "It's—it's a little better. It was mighty bad, though, when Mr. Roberts called me to his desk. Oh, I say, Ed, I never felt meaner in my life than I did to-day."

"Why? Were you so sick?"

"Sick, nothing! You think I mind a little thing like that?"

Miller could not restrain a grin. Ten minutes before, Tom had been speaking of his health as though he were contemplating a speedy dissolution.

"Of course, I was sick all right," continued Madden, somewhat disconcerted by the grin. "But that wasn't what made me feel so mean. The thing that hit me was when Mr. Roberts took me out, he was so awfully kind to me. When I told him how sick I felt, he looked as bad as if he was the fellow that was sick. And then he did such a lot of little things for me, that I felt as small as I could. You see, I had been worrying the life out of him all the morning—and some of the things I did were on purpose too. And then the way he heaped shovels of coal on my head was a caution."

Eddie was too much alive to the chance now offered him of gaining his first recruit to take notice of this astonishing scriptural misquotation. Here was just the opening, the more gratifying that it was wholly unexpected.

"If Mr. Roberts knew you as well as I do, Tommy, he'd like you just naturally."

"That's because I've treated you decent."

"Well, why not treat your teacher decently? Mr. Phillips liked you very much, and you liked him."

"Yes, Mr. Phillips knew me, and I knew him."

"Exactly; now isn't it about time to give Mr. Roberts a chance to know you, too?"

"Hey?"

"You have found out that Mr. Roberts isn't half so bad as you thought, and I know that you would like to let him know, if you only saw your way of going about it."

"You can bet on that," answered Tommy emphatically.

"Now you're talking, Tom. If you behave for Mr. Roberts the way you did for Mr. Phillips, he will begin to know you too, as you have begun to know him."

"I'm going to behave in class," bawled Tom, as he kicked the blanket into the middle of the room, "if I have to put myself into a strait jacket."

"Then you're the boy for my scheme. You see, Tom, it would be absurd for us to expect Mr. Roberts to care for us when he always sees us at our worst; if we want him to like us, we must make

up for lost time, and show him ourselves at our very best. We haven't been fair to ourselves since he took charge of us, and it's no wonder that he thinks we're a hard crowd, because that's exactly the way we have acted. Now, Father Noland has suggested this scheme to me, and we're going to try to get up a society among our fellows who will be willing to act on their best behavior for a while. Will you join?"

"*You bet!*" roared Tommy. "Say, Ed, tell me all about it."

Beginning with Tom's departure from the classroom, Eddie related all that had taken place up to the present hour. Young Madden listened with brightening eyes.

"My!" he exclaimed when Eddie had come to an end, "but that's a great scheme. It will be as good as a play. You can count me in from the start. I don't care what anybody says, Mr. Roberts is a peach! I could see it in his eyes, and in his face, and in everything he did this afternoon."

Eddie laughed genially.

"Put her here on that," he said, extending a hand which the other grasped cordially. "Just think of it, Tom; this time yesterday, if this plan had been in my head, you would have been one of the last boys I'd think of speaking to about it; and to-day, you're the very first; and now that you

are in it, I hope that you'll try to get some others interested in the scheme."

"Of course I will. There's Harry McCabe who lives across the street; I think I'll fetch him in right off."

"Oh, I say," protested Ed, "you're not going to begin with *him*? Why, he didn't get along any too well with Mr. Phillips, and he's more down on Mr. Roberts than any one in the room. When I tried to talk to the boys this afternoon, he was the one who did the most kicking. If he comes in at the end, it will be a good thing even then."

Tommy smiled sweetly.

"Don't you fret about him, Eddie," he said. "You just leave him to me, and I'll have him in all right at the very beginning."

"How are you going to go about it?"

"Oh, easy. You see, I'll just reason with him at first, and try to make him see the thing the way we see it. If he doesn't, I'll punch him till he does."

"But we mustn't get in members that way, Tom; we mustn't have any fighting at all. Father Noland doesn't intend us to work it that way."

"Yes; but you see, Father Noland and you don't know McCabe as well as I do. It's the only way to fetch him; I know him like a book. Of course, I'll try to persuade him all right; but then, you see,

I may have to punch his head. He won't mind it from me anyhow; he knows me pretty well, and he's used to my ways. Of course, I won't smash his head if I can manage to talk it into him in any other way."

"Well, Tom, suppose we split the difference. You try to persuade him; but if you can't do it the first time you try it, let the head-punching business go; and wait for a while before you do anything more. Then you and I can have a talk about it."

"Do you mean I'm to promise not to punch his head?" inquired Thomas, looking hurt and injured.

"That's right," answered Ed blithely.

The cat had just put a timid foot upon the door-sill. Tom let his boot fly at it vindictively, and, as pussy disappeared with the speed of a lightning express, looked somewhat relieved. For the shortest fraction of a second after the hasty departure of the cat, there was an expression of perplexity on his face; suddenly it gave way to a bright smile.

"All right, Ed; you're the boss, and I'll do whatever you want. All the same, you'll find that McCabe will be in it Monday morning."

And so it came to pass. McCabe was the second boy to register as a member of this amiable band of amiable conspirators. Many weeks elapsed

before Eddie learned how this remarkable conversion had been affected.

It came about quite suddenly on the Sunday afternoon which followed Eddie's visit to Master Madden. Tommy, feeling quite well, and nothing the worse for his short stay in bed, had called the innocent and unsuspecting McCabe over to his yard for a friendly chat on the new movement. They held converse beside the cellar door. Tom spoke at length and with considerable earnestness; but his listener merely answered these eloquent pleadings with, "Think I'm a fool?" "See any green in my eye?"

Tom renewed his pleadings, and spoke with admirable patience. In answer to this second effort, McCabe with much scorn, remarked:

"You goin' to be a sissy-boy, eh? I never thought—"

What young Master McCabe "never thought" will remain a mystery; for at this juncture, Madden got him around the neck, and tumbled him recklessly into the cellar. Before McCabe could give vent to his astonishment and indignation, Tommy had banged the door to, and squatted upon it.

"Hey, hey!" bawled McCabe at his loudest. He added in a less ear-piercing tone: "You better let me out of this, you freak, or it will be the worse for you. My brother will be home on a vacation to-

morrow, and he'll fix you. You'll wish you wasn't born. Let me out, I tell you."

"Your brother!" exclaimed Madden, scornfully. "I don't care if your whole family gets home. I'm not going to let you out until you listen to reason; you can just bank on that. It's pretty dark in there, isn't it?"

"You just get off that door."

"I will, just as soon as you are ready to listen to reason. Are you ready yet? The sooner, the better."

"Hi! hi!" bawled the prisoner, "help!"

"Prince, Prince," yelled Tommy, drowning the voice of the victim. "Come here, old fellow."

As the "old fellow" did not acknowledge this call, Tommy put two fingers into his mouth, and gave a shrill whistle; in answer to which, a large and not very amiable looking bull-terrier came leaping to his master.

"Hey, there, Prince," continued Tom, arising and pointing to the door, "Watch it—sick him! Rats, old boy, rats!"

The dog made for the door and beat upon it as though he would burst through it, barking at the same time with a violence which was enough to unnerve even the redoubtable Harry McCabe.

"As you don't care to listen to a fellow who only wants to reason with you," roared Tom above the

fierce growling of the dog. "I'll leave you to the care of my pup; he's a new one, and doesn't know you from Adam. He has no use for strangers. If you try to come out, you won't know what's happened to you. Good-by; I'll come around after supper, when you've had lots of time to think."

"Tom! Tom!" implored the thoroughly frightened captive, "you know you and me's always been partners."

"That partnership is busted," returned Tom, austere; but his face, could Harry have seen it, did not at all tally with the severity of his tones.

"Don't you believe it, Tom. I'm on your side every time, even if it's to stand up for old Roberts."

"*Who?*" roared Madden.

"Mr. Roberts, I mean."

"Next time you'd better start off with saying what you mean. Well, are you quite sure that you are willing to listen to reason?"

"Let me out, and I'll listen to anything."

"Honest Injun?"

"Sure! Hurry up, Tommy; you always was a good fellow, and I'll stand by you every time."

The dog proved to be a more difficult subject to persuade than Master McCabe. Prince had set his heart upon exploring the mystery beyond the cellar door. He had shown his interest in McCabe's

remarks by howling every time that interesting young gentleman opened his mouth to speak; and he seemed convinced that the boy behind the cellar door would be worthy of closer study and investigation. Accordingly Prince took no notice of his master's repeated commands to depart, and was only persuaded to obey by a hearty kick from the victorious Thomas. Harry McCabe within five minutes of his liberation was entirely of the same mind with his "partner."

CHAPTER VI.

*IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN HOW CAKES AND LEMONADE CAN
HELP IN A GOOD CAUSE, AND THE CLASS BEGINS
TO PUT THE BEST FOOT FORWARD.*

THE morning and the afternoon of Monday were devoted by Tom and Eddie to the gaining of new recruits. Fifteen boys—numbering more than one-third of the class—were won over with but little difficulty. Some of these gave in their allegiance because they were good sensible boys, and liked the plan both for their own sakes and for the sake of the general well-being of the class. Others were attracted and gained by a certain novelty in the plan. Others, again, gifted with a sense of humor, saw much promise of fun in the enterprise.

Two or three, absolutely without any convictions one way or the other, yielded simply to the wishes of Miller.

After class, an informal meeting was held in the hay-loft above the stable at the back of Mr. Miller's house. The occasion was made doubly interesting by a supply of cake and lemonade. Luckily, the day, for that season of the year, was unusually warm; and when Eddie and Tom appeared, each carrying a pitcher in which the ice jingled pleasantly, while the golden lemons danced to the motion, several who had thus far been faint-hearted, then and there declared that Eddie's plan of campaign was the jolliest thing they had ever been concerned in. But when the cook entered a little later with a dish of cream cakes, the delight of all knew no bounds.

It was almost impossible for the next ten minutes to make out what the young gentlemen were talking about. There was enthusiasm enough and to spare. But while one boy was admiring the object of their association, another was assenting heartily to his remarks under the impression that the topic of admiration was the lemonade, while a third would project himself into the conversation by assenting with the first and the second speaker, under the belief that they were speaking of cream cakes.

On this occasion, Ed felt what a blessed thing it was to have a big brother; it was James Miller who had provided these good things. As he gave Eddie the money, he had added, "And if you want any more just call on me. I'm with you in this enterprise to the end!"

It was James Miller, too, who called the meeting to order, and started the organization by making a sort of speech.

"Boys," he began, "I wish to congratulate you on being here. You have a good object in view; for you are determined that from now on you are going to make it a point to put the best foot forward—to show your best side and not your worst. Every man has his best and his worst side. The man who always uses his worst side is a villain, the man who always uses his best side is a saint; most of us show a little of both sides, and are neither the one nor the other. A boy, who gets into the habit of being lazy and idle and impudent and troublesome, may flatter himself that, in spite of everything, he has a good heart. But men and boys are not measured by the good deeds that they can do, but by what they actually do. From what I have heard, you boys have been showing your worst sides for some time. If you go on much longer as you have been going, you will actually become what you have lately appeared to be—

good for nothing. We do not measure things by what might have been, but by what is. To-day you are going to make a new start, and I tell you in advance that you cannot fail if you hold together. In reality, and in the long run, a man is what he shows himself to be. If you help one another to be what you know it is your duty to be, the result will make you ever so much happier and better, not only now, but for the rest of your lives. I do not think that I have expressed myself very clearly; but if you think about what I have said, you will see that there's something in it. Your meeting here shows that you are going to cultivate self-respect, and no boy can cultivate that, and go very far wrong. Here's to the health of the new society."

James bravely drank a glass of lemonade; the boys, nothing loath, followed suit, and then broke into applause.

The meeting lasted for something over an hour and a half. Had not the lemonade and cakes come to an end, the proceedings might have been going on yet. It had been the intention to have a conference upon ways and means once a week. But, in the first flush of cake and lemonade enthusiasm, this wouldn't do at all.

"Let's meet here every day," suggested Horace Hanlon. He had eaten an unbelievable number

of cakes, and drank five glasses of lemonade, without being any the worse for it.

As everybody arose to second this motion, there was no need of putting it to the vote.

The next time Mr. Roberts entered his class-room, he was treated to a surprise. In a tiny glass, a bunch of fresh and fragrant flowers was awaiting him upon his desk.

Had it been a mock bouquet or a cabbage, the teacher would not have been taken aback; but this particular sort of attention from boys was something new in his experience. He turned from the flowers, and glanced suspiciously at the faces of the students. He failed to notice the air of respectful attention which most of them were wearing, but he did not fail to observe the sneers and mocking smiles of several, who, unaware of the plan of campaign, were making no attempt to conceal their scorn and disgust.

"A new way of showing me their dislike," thought Mr. Roberts, bitterly. "I never suspected that boys of fourteen and fifteen could be guilty of such sarcasm and irony." And walking over to the nearest window he threw the flowers out into the street, without so much as saying a word.

Tommy Madden's face grew aflame, and he dropped his head. He raised it presently, and doubled his fists. But it was not with his teacher

that he was angry. He had seen the broad smile of scorn on the face of Charles Dutrow. Dutrow was the largest boy in the class, and, as it happened, was also the most hopeless dunce.

"Just wait till recess comes, Mr. Dutrow," soliloquized Madden under his breath, "and I'll give you *such* a lesson in politeness."

When the bell rang, Tommy hastened from the room, and stationed himself near the foot of the stairs, at the door which opened upon the playground. Presently Dutrow, looking perfectly contented and fatuous, came down the stairway.

"Look here, Dutrow," cried Tom with all the abruptness of strong indignation, "if I had a sickly smile on my face like the measly thing you had on when Mr. Roberts got those flowers, I'd go to a doctor, and have it cut off. It was uglier than a wart. If you only knew how you looked when you smile that way, you'd drop dead. I saw you, and it gave me a pain."

As the astonished Dutrow listened to this address from a lad who hardly reached his shoulders, he turned several colors.

"What do you mean, you little brat?"

"What do I mean, you long-legged freak?" bawled Tom, losing what little of temper he started out with; "I mean that you ought to get a book or a private teacher or something, and study some-

thing about manners. Those flowers were none of your funeral; and the way you acted was like a cow."

For answer, Dutrow struck Tom with his open hand. Madden returned this attention with his closed fist. Uttering an exclamation of rage, the larger boy caught his opponent in his arms and flung him roughly to the ground. Madden was up at once, and was about to renew the quarrel, when Miller caught him by the arms, while two of the larger students seized Dutrow.

"Let me go; let me at him; he said I was a cow," bellowed Dutrow.

"And so you are; you're more kinds of a cow than any fellow I ever saw," panted Madden, crushed but undaunted. "Let me loose," he entreated Miller; "I'm not afraid of him."

"What's the matter now?" asked a prefect, as he made his way through the crowd which had already gathered.

"He called me a cow," blubbered Dutrow, overcome by various emotions, "and I couldn't stand it." He put his hand to his eye, which Madden had reached in the first blow.

"I only meant he didn't have no manners," explained Madden.

"I'm afraid there are no manners to spare between you," said the prefect sternly, despite the

grim smile which the question of manners between two such boys could not fail to arouse. "Of course, you are boys of the Second Academic class. Go to the office of the prefect of discipline, both of you, and wait there till he has time to attend to your case."

Fighting was considered a serious matter in Delta College. Also, Tommy had a delicacy about explaining the cause of his ire. Both, accordingly, received a serious warning, which was emphasized by a strapping. Tom endured his punishment stoically. He felt that he was suffering persecution for justice's sake. Dutrow evinced strong emotion.

"Say, Charlie," remarked the victim of persecution to his sobbing companion, as the two went up the stairway together. "I'm sorry I got you into trouble. I'm not going to call you a cow any more."

"You'd better not," snarled Charlie, blowing his nose. Madden was sharp enough to detect in the other's voice a strain of weakness.

"That's right; but then you're going to do the right thing by Mr. Roberts after this, the same as the rest of us."

"I've behaved just as well as you."

"Well, we're both of us going to do a heap better from this out."

For answer, Dutrow growled and muttered under his breath.

Nevertheless, for the next two days, he was perfectly respectful to his teacher, and then, before his eye had quite come back to its normal size, he was persuaded to enter his name on the list of those concerned in the new movement by no less a person than Master Thomas Madden himself.

CHAPTER VII.

*IN WHICH THE CLASS GOES UPON DRESS PARADE, AND
CYRIL HARMON SUFFERS PERSECUTION.*

ON the succeeding Friday morning, twenty-two students of the Second Academic presented an unusually fine and striking appearance. Their shoes were so blacked that they glittered. In his coat each member of this shining array wore a boutonniere, while the taste and variety shown in the dressing of hair suggested the suspicion that many a big sister had been called upon to contribute of her taste and dexterity to the extraordinary display of neatness.

Two or three had gone so far as to make use of their sister's cologne—which came near to leading to unpleasantness. McCabe and one or two others maintained that boys ought to draw the line at cologne.

"I don't see why," returned one of the youngsters under criticism.

"There's no use in running things into the ground," explained McCabe. "A fellow that wants to smell pretty hasn't any more sense than a girl. Anyhow, where are we going to stop?"

"That's what I'd like to know?" Madden chimed in. "The way it is, some of the fellows have their heads parted in the middle—I mean their hair, of course—you fellows needn't grin that way. I can stand that even if they don't pretend to be football players, and look like dudes. I can stand that; but, if we don't stop somewhere, the next thing the fellows will be going around in corsets."

This speech got the boys into good humor. It was settled out of hand that the line be severely drawn at cologne; and a committee of two was appointed to see that all traces of this objectionable detail in the toilet of some be effaced before the opening of class.

A word in explanation of this sudden burst of neatness. Mr. Roberts, not without good cause, had made some comments on the slovenliness in dress shown by a number of his pupils. A hint from him, at that time, would have been enough; but he had given more than a hint.

Nevertheless, when the boys entered class, he failed to appreciate the demonstration.

"They are mocking me again," he said as he gazed grimly upon the shining array.

Without a single word of comment, without giving the least sign to show that he had noticed anything out of the common, he proceeded with the hearing of recitations.

"We got the rubber again," said Harry McCabe, gloomily, when recess came. Harry, particularly when he was excited, was wont to sink into the language of his neighborhood, where there existed a decided preference for strong and popular expressions to the exclusion of more classic forms.

"Yes; it's no use," added Hanlon. "We're behaving like a lot of angels, but nobody seems to appreciate it."

"Just look at the way we're keeping silence," put in Dutrow.

"You'd think we were a deaf and dumb asylum," said Harry Warner. "Why, sometimes it's so dead quiet that you could hear a pin drop."

"No, you couldn't," cried Madden. "I know it, because I tried it. Last hour when it was so quiet, and we were all a little put out because Mr. Roberts wouldn't take notice of our styles, I let a pin drop seven or eight times, just to see. I heard it, because it fell at my feet, and I had my ears stretched to listen; but I'll bet none of you fellows did."

"Anyhow," resumed Dutrow, "I don't see any use in our behaving ourselves, if no one seems to care whether we do or don't."

"Never say die," said Eddie Miller. "After all, whether we're appreciated or not, we're doing the right thing; and the right thing is worth doing on its own account."

"That's what they call acting on principle," commented Madden with the most perfect seriousness.

This was too much for McCabe. He broke into an eloquent grin—the grin we get from one who has known us for years, and who puts all his knowledge of us into it. Tommy grew as red as the heart of a ripe watermelon. His first impulse was to get angry; but his sense of humor came to his help, and he broke into a ringing laugh, in which he was joined by the entire group.

"I thought we were going to make a great impression this morning," continued Tony Froller, when the laughter had died away.

"I do really believe that everything would have come our way, if it hadn't been for that little brat of a Harmon," said McCabe, gazing, as he spoke, with no little disgust and indignation at Master Cyril, who was sunning himself on a bench hard by, and perfectly happy in his self-imposed solitude.

"Did you ever see such a walking stick?" asked Carroll Morgan. "He's been better treated by Mr.

Roberts than any of the fellows; and now, when it comes to doing the right thing, he doesn't seem in the least bit interested. He could do more than any of us, if he wanted to help us out."

"Don't be too hard on Cyril; he's all right," said Eddie Miller. "After all, he joined our crowd just as soon as we asked him."

"Yes; of course, he did," McCabe made answer. "But that was simply because he didn't have the nerve to say no. But just tell me what he has done since he joined us? He always says 'yes' to anything we want him to do, but any one can see that he doesn't care a rap which way things go. It's an infernal shame! Now to-day, when us fellows were dressing our prettiest he was dressed just the same as on any other old day."

"But don't you see," interposed Miller, "that he's always nicely dressed? He didn't have to make any change."

"At least," growled McCabe, stealthily shying a pebble at Cyril's unconscious ankles with subsequent ear-piercing results, "at least he might have a flower in his buttonhole, same as the rest of us. What's he howling about now?"

Cyril had arisen with a certain want of deliberation in the movement and was hopping about spasmodically. Scarcely one of the lookers-on, I am sorry to say, felt in the least sorry for him.

"What's the matter, Cyril?" asked Eddie, kindly, as he walked over and placed himself beside the victim.

"Some one's hit my foot with a pebble."

"Does it want its mamma?" began McCabe; but a look from Miller shamed him into silence.

"I'm half sorry for you," said Madden. "All the same, it served you right for not wearing a bouquet in your buttonhole. Why didn't you do the same as the rest of us?"

"I intended to, but I forgot."

"Forgot!" gasped Eddie, hardly able to conceal his disgust. That any boy should forget a matter like that!

His classmates had some reason for being indignant with Cyril Harmon. Had he appeared wearing a boutonniere, it is more than probable that Mr. Roberts would have viewed their proceedings in a more favorable light. He knew and trusted Cyril; and the fact that his best pupil had not identified himself with the members of the dress parade confirmed him in his suspicions that there was an organization on foot with the sole purpose of making a mock of him.

Harmon, in the heat and heart of all this boyish enthusiasm, pursued the even tenor of his unpopular way. His behavior, as hitherto, was unexceptionable. It is true he had joined the organiza-

tion; but he had done so as one joins, perforce, a hostile camp, through fear of some greater evil. In a word, he was not in touch with the boys. Consequently, it was almost impossible for him to sympathize with them in their present undertaking. With each day his unpopularity was increasing, and still he seemed to take no note of this change of sentiment. He was blind.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH CYRIL TURNS THE SCALE, MR. ROBERTS ENTERS THE YARD, AND A SMALL NEWSBOY IS VERY MUCH ASTONISHED.

ALTHOUGH the class of Second Academic had been considered a model one so long as it was under the charge of Mr. Phillips, yet even in those golden days, it was, in one respect, open to severe criticism. Many of the students—Eddie Miller amongst them—were very poor writers; and the written class-exercises—however good, as regards the matter, were, taken collectively, of a decidedly unlovely appearance.

Perhaps Mr. Phillips was to be blamed for this; very likely he was. But I for one shall not be the first to cast a stone at him. A teacher, even the best, is but finite; and, what is more, he must

of necessity be so. This may sound like a truism; but there be parents who, while realizing the fact, seem unable to reconcile themselves to it. If Mr. Phillips had neglected this one detail, he had diligently attended to a hundred others.

It came to pass, then, that when, under the rule of Mr. Roberts, the boys set strenuously about showing themselves at their best, it did not occur to them that their written exercises left anything to be desired. In recitations and in conduct they were astonishingly satisfactory. Indeed, in the matter of silence, they overdid the thing. So unnatural did they appear, so stiff, so rigid, so unlike little boys, as they sat calm, composed, judicial and, as had been agreed, with folded arms, that Mr. Roberts' suspicions grew and strengthened with each passing hour.

Very wisely, and, it must be confessed, untrue to his usual method of acting, he chose to make no remark on these doubtful points; but the themes, handed in on the morning of the dress parade, gave him something certain and palpable to go on.

"Look at these," he exclaimed, holding them up to the attentive class. "Papers of this sort would be discreditable to the little preparatory boys. If infinite variety were the object at which you aimed, I hardly see how you could do any better. In this collection there is not, I dare say, one paper that

corresponds in any way with the others. Eight papers have ragged edges; three look like patterns for some sort of a buzz-saw—each one a different kind of a pattern, each saw to have different kind of teeth. Again, some of these papers have no name at all signed to them; others are graced with the initials of their owners. Of those that are signed, some are signed at the top, some again at the bottom, some on the opposite side of the page, off in some obscure corner. While most of them have the school motto A. M. D. G., there is nothing in the style of the writing to lead one to suppose that God's glory, whether little or great, was taken into consideration at all. Were a stranger to enter the class and ask me to show him your theme-work, I should really be ashamed to show them."

Mr. Roberts then went to the blackboard, and proceeded to teach them the exact form in which he wished them to write their themes. As he noticed that practically every boy in the class was industriously taking notes (with labored and exaggerated diligence, he thought) he bit his lips.

Never were the boys more sanguine than on the following morning. The class was now a unit. At the meeting on the preceding afternoon, every member of the Second Academic had been in attendance. There were no recalcitrants; all were persuaded that it was a matter almost of justice to

atone to their teacher for their previous wretched behavior. In this meeting, the question of themes had been discussed and arranged to their perfect satisfaction.

Rarely in the history of any class-room had so pretty a set of themes been handed in by the small boys. The papers were uniform in size and appearance; and the penmanship displayed upon them was, for the most part, a thing of beauty. To the subsequent tears and similar manifestations of distress on the part of big sisters, they were adorned with ribbons. McCabe's was graced with the green badge which he had proudly worn on last St. Patrick's Day. Madden, in addition to a beautiful half-yard of blue ribbon, had signed his theme, "Your truly friend, Thomas Francis Xavier Madden."

There were three rows of desks in the room, and each row had been assigned its particular color. When the trio of youths appointed to the task of collecting the themes had laid the exercises, one upon the other, before the teacher, the national colors, red, white, and blue, made sixty odd eyes dance with pleasure.

The teacher looked at the papers, as they lay before him, first with a start, then with wonder and perplexity. A very nervous little boy in the front bench could not restrain himself at sight of Mr.

Roberts' expression, and burst into a giggle. Forthwith, the entire class (by a reaction not at all surprising, in view of their last three days of excessive restraint) broke into an uncontrollable roar of laughter.

Of course, that settled it; if Mr. Roberts were sure of anything, it was that a new exhibition of covert impudence had been offered him in these much beribboned exercises. The laughter ceased quickly, and changed to an expression of dismay. Mr. Roberts then made a few remarks which plunged his listeners into gloom for the rest of that morning.

“I say, Cyril,” began Eddie Miller as he took the unpopular boy aside at recess, “do you know that the boys of the class are awfully down on you?”

“I guess I do,” answered Cyril, as his eyes became watery. “And I don’t see why: I’m doing the best I can. There was a ribbon on my theme this morning, the same as the others—and mine was the prettiest too. It cost twenty cents a yard, and was silk.”

“Yes; but they haven’t forgot all that’s gone before. You didn’t take much interest in our plans in the beginning, and that set the fellows against you worse than ever. You know, Cyril, that I have been with you all along; and I have tried to make the fellows treat you properly; but it has been hard

work. If it were not that they are all resolved to stay on their good behavior, they would have handled you pretty roughly. If they make a break at all, it will be because some of them will do something to annoy you."

For answer Cyril gave a suppressed sob.

"I'm not telling you this to make you feel bad, Cyril; but I want you to know it, in order that you may change it. You can make yourself all right with the boys, if you want to."

"How?" asked poor Cyril, eagerly.

"Easily. The boys want some one to go to Mr. Roberts after class, and have a talk with him, and explain matters. From what he said to-day, we can see that he thinks we boys are playing a sort of game; and we're not. The fellows wanted me to go, but I'm a little nervous; and I thought you might try it. You're not afraid of him, are you?"

"I'll go," said Cyril, readily; "and I'll say anything to him you want."

"First rate; the boys will forgive you everything, sure. Now all you need do is to tell him that the boys are all of them sorry for the way they acted in the beginning, and that they all intend to do the right thing. Tell him we're trying our best to behave, and that if he isn't pleased with us we don't wonder; in one word, make an apology for the class."

"I'll do it just as soon as you want me to."

"Speak to him, then, when the boys go to the study-hall at eleven. Only be sure not to tell him about our having formed a sort of society; we can let him know of that later on."

And Cyril obeyed. In consequence, he came to the study-hall five minutes late; but looked as calm and serene as usual. At noon-time the boys crowded around him to hear the account of his interview. They looked at him kindly, and spoke to him as though he were a fellow creature.

Cyril was happier at that moment than he had been for many a day.

"Tell us all about it," said Miller, in the name of the crowd.

"It's very short. I went into his room and told him how we are all going to try to do as well as we could, and how we were sorry for the way we had started out with him; and I said that the boys of the class had asked me to apologize in their name for the trouble we had caused."

"You said just what we wanted," interrupted McCabe: "but what did *he* say?"

"He looked just the way he did when we gave in those exercises with ribbons on. Then, he put his hand on his forehead, and seemed to be thinking. Then he raised his head, and said he was much obliged, and he thanked me; and that he would like to think about it "

"Is that all: what did you do?" asked Miller.

"I went out."

There was an exclamation of disappointment from the crowd.

"Anyhow, boys," Miller suggested, "we ought to thank Cyril for what he did."

"So we do." "Good boy, Cyril," said several.

One result, at all events, had followed from this move: Cyril was again in good standing with the class; and perfect harmony prevailed once more.

In the afternoon, one of the younger boys brought Mr. Roberts a basket of grapes.

"I never receive presents," he said stiffly.

During the two hours that followed, he was more constrained, more nervous than usual.

Shortly after the dismissal of classes, he happened to pass through the playground. Many of his class were standing near the hand-ball alley, discussing earnestly the latest phase of the situation. Cyril was the first to notice his appearance.

"There's Mr. Roberts, boys," he said in some wonder. They had never seen their teacher on the playground before.

There was a whisper among the group; then all turned their faces towards him, and raised their hats. They could not possibly have been more respectful. But Mr. Roberts had noticed the whis-

pered consultation, and his suspicions were aroused. The old feeling that he was being mocked came back at once, and he returned their salute with unsmiling stiffness.

As it happened, Father Noland, who but rarely left his room, was a witness to this scene. Thanks to Eddie, he was well informed of the present state of affairs, and Eddie, thanks to him, had not given up hope; and, brave himself, still held the others together.

"Good evening, Mr. Roberts. I was just watching your boys. I never saw a crowd of youngsters salute a teacher in better form than yours did just now."

"Yes; but did you notice how they first held a sort of secret consultation?"

"I suppose they were commenting on the fact that you were in the yard. Probably they had been talking about you, and your sudden appearance rather startled them."

"It was not a mere comment, I feel, Father; up to a few hours ago, I was almost certain that those boys had entered into a sort of conspiracy to mock me."

"And have you changed your opinion?"

"Not entirely, Father; but when Harmon came to see me this morning, and made a speech in favor of the others, and told me that they were all

trying their best to behave, I was a trifle upset. I began to doubt."

"And now?"

"I have been in a state of perplexity all the afternoon, not knowing what to think; but just now, when I saw them whisper and take their hats off together, I returned to my original feeling. Cyril Harmon has been duped by those boys, who have gone into a conspiracy. Exteriorly, they are respectful enough; but everything is so exaggerated, one can see that the whole thing is a joke."

"Nonsense!"

"This morning I could have assured you that it was so. I admit that I have been a trifle shaken in my belief. However I try, I cannot help still feeling that they have combined together, and they make a show of doing everything I advise. But the show is exaggerated, and the whole thing is plainly ironical."

"Do you really think that they have combined to make fun of you?"

"That is the impression which, do what I may, I cannot shake off."

Father Noland made a slight, but impressive pause before speaking.

"Might you not explain it," he then said, "by saying that perhaps they had combined together

so as to help each other to do what they knew to be right?"

"Remember, Father, you are speaking of boys!"

"Yes; boys," repeated Father Noland, with a suspicion of irritation in his voice. He winced under any attacks upon his young friends. "Why not? And may you not also suppose that in attempting to act together, they just overdid the thing a trifle?"

"You are making rather heavy demands upon my imagination, Father," answered Mr. Roberts with a sad smile.

"Not at all, sir; boys are as fine a class of beings as you can expect to find upon earth—at least, they would be, if they were properly understood."

The teacher laughed the laugh of incredulity.

"Now, to take the youngsters of your own class," pursued Father Noland, nothing daunted; "they are the most obliging, the jolliest boys I ever met. If a man gets their hearts, they will do anything for him."

This remark was received with the same sad, weary smile.

"You are under the impression, Mr. Roberts, that whenever your youngsters do anything in accordance with what you have advised them to do, they are merely mocking you?"

"I was certain of it this morning."

"Oh! So you are beginning to doubt? Well, I think I can help you to remove that doubt. Now a good way to verify the truth or falsity of your belief would be to take them suddenly when they are off their guard—that is, before they have any time to concert a plan. There will be no opportunity for collusion, and if they show the same good will then, it will be clear that you have made a mistake in judging them. I am quite confident that you are mistaken; will you give me a chance to show you that I am right?"

"If you wish it, Father," returned Mr. Roberts with no little reluctance.

"Good! I want an evening paper. Here's a cent. Suppose you go over, and ask whether some one of the crowd will oblige you by going out and buying an evening paper."

Mr. Roberts caught his breath sharply, like a diver as he first touches the water.

"Ask those boys a favor!" he exclaimed.

"Remember your promise; you must stick to it."

Mr. Roberts turned his face away for a moment. He was nerving himself for an ordeal. Father Noland noticed, with mingled feelings of edification and amusement, that the teacher crossed himself, as does the Catholic boy before making a plunge.

At length, he walked with slow, hesitating steps towards his boys.

It was like a bolt from the blue. Did their eyes deceive them? Was Mr. Roberts actually going to talk to them outside of the class-room? They grew quite nervous as he drew nearer and nearer.

"Excuse me," he began in a strange, labored voice; "but will one of you be kind enough to go out and buy me an *Evening Post*?" As he spoke, he held up the penny piece.

Mr. Roberts expected an awkward silence to follow this remark. Could he believe his ears? Could he believe his eyes? Was he awake or asleep? In an instant the whole crowd was crushing and surging about him, like the waves not of an angry, but of an enthusiastic sea.

"I'll get it, sir." "No; take me." They were all speaking to this effect; all were clamoring for the permission.

Eddie Miller secured the penny; but before he could extricate himself from the crush, Madden and McCabe, ignoring the proffered cent, had broken into a run and were already at the gate. Then the others fell into the race; and with the exception of the staid and methodical Cyril Harmon, not a pupil of Second Academic was to be seen in the playground for the next two or three minutes.

There was a badly frightened newsboy in Detroit on that memorable afternoon. He was standing at the corner, when he perceived a youngster dashing

towards him, as though his mission were one of life and death.

"*Evening Post*—quick," roared the runner, then half a square off.

The newsboy had barely succeeded in getting a copy from his pack, when Tommy Madden was upon him.

He snatched the paper, and bawling out, "I'll pay you some other time," turned about, and made as quickly as he had come, for the college gate.

The newsboy was about to give chase, when he was dismayed to see that a mob of boys was bearing down upon him.

He turned tail and fled for his life.

"Hey! hey!"—"Stop!"—"Hold on!"—"What's the matter with you?"

There did not seem to be anything the matter with the poor fellow, judging by the way he ran.

How long this singular chase would have lasted had the scared little newsboy's way been unobstructed, it is difficult to conjecture. A policeman happened to be in the neighborhood, and, naturally, took a part.

"Stop, you young beggar," he cried springing in front of him. "What's the matter now?"

"They want to rob me of me papers," gasped the boy.

Before the policeman could inquire into details,

the pursuers had come upon the scene, and in the quickest possible time the papers had changed hands, the boy was putting a handful of coppers into his pocket, and the pursuers were making for the college on the run.

Meanwhile Mr. Roberts was in a daze. While he was still trying to pull himself together, Tommy all aglow, breathless, and supremely happy, returned, and handed him the evening paper, which he paid for, we may add, at five times its value before returning home.

"Here you are, sir; it's the last edition," he panted.

"Thank, you, Tom." The word "Tom" came from his lips slowly. He had very rarely, since he began to teach, called any boy by his Christian name.

"You're welcome, sir," answered Tom, his eyes sparkling with gratification. He knew that Mr. Roberts for once was pleased with him. There had been many failures, but success had come at last.

Just then the main body of the Second Academicians came streaming into the yard.

"Wouldn't you like another paper, sir?" inquired Eddie stepping up with his. "This is the *Evening Star*, sir."

"I'm much obliged to you, er—isn't your first name Eddie?—O, it is. Well, I'm much obliged to

you, Eddie; but I shall scarcely need another paper."

"Take it anyhow, sir; if you don't want it yourself, you might give it to some one of the teachers."

"And you've got to take mine too, sir," put in McCabe. "Mine's got all the baseball news. Don't you like baseball, sir?"

All the boys were gathered about their teacher by this time, and they awaited with almost painful interest the answer to this question.

"I used to like it very much indeed when I was a boy. In fact, when I attended the St. Louis University, I was the pitcher for the college team for the last three years that I attended there. That was in the boarding school days."

Before the conversation, thus happily begun, came to an end Mr. Roberts, at the earnest request of all present, had undertaken to be manager of the Second Academic football team, Thomas Madden captain; and when, in the midst of the overtures which led up to the promise, the president of the college happened to pass through the playground, he readjusted his spectacles, and strained his eyes in staring incredulity. Yes; there was no mistake. Mr. Roberts, surrounded by more than two-thirds of his class, was telling the spellbound listeners of a game that had been played and won several years before any of the listeners saw the light of day!

CHAPTER IX.

*IN WHICH MR. ROBERTS GIVES AN OPINION OF HIS BOYS
WHICH DOES NOT SQUARE WITH HIS OPENING SEN-
TIMENTS, AND EVERYBODY IS HAPPY.*

"A good boy," Mr. Roberts was saying in the room of Father Noland, "is the noblest work of God. There are some men who do not believe in boys, but they don't understand them. If anything annoys me, it is to hear people talking of youngsters as though the little fellows had no souls. If people were to come into my class for half a day—I mean people of that kind—they would learn more in an hour than they would ordinarily learn in a year."

"I agree with you cordially, Mr. Roberts," Father Noland made answer, a merry twinkle in his eye giving the lie to the extreme gravity of his face; "and if we could only succeed in keeping our boys as they are, what an immensely improved world it would be!"

"Indeed, yes, Father. Just think! some of my boys, in fact most of them, go to holy communion regularly every week; and I am almost sure that many of them are as delicate of conscience as though they were leading the lives of religious."

"Er—haven't they changed a great deal since they came into your hands?"

"Not one bit, sir; it is I that have changed."

"O come!" remonstrated the Father.

"That is the fact, Father; and what is more, you yourself believe it. Now, don't you?"

"In one sense the boys have not changed; but in another they have, Mr. Roberts. We are all of us full of all sorts of possibilities. Those boys of yours, who had been playing their best under their former teacher, began to play their worst under you."

"It was my fault," put in Mr. Roberts, humbly. "They knew that I didn't expect much of them."

"People find it hard to give us more than we expect. Well, if your boys had gone on playing their worst side, they would have become far other from what they had been."

"They have taught me a lesson that I shall never forget."

"And," added Father Noland with animation, "they have taught themselves one of the best lessons that they can ever hope to learn either in school or out, namely, to suppress their worst selves, and to bring out their best selves, in spite of want of encouragement or approbation; in other words, they have learned to put their best foot forward under any and all circumstances, which is an-

other way of saying that they have learned to act on principle."

"That's more than I have taught, Father. Formerly, I was acting on principle every time I opened my mouth to teach my boys; but now teaching has become a labor of love. And yet I'm busier now than I ever was before. What little of time is left me after the work of correcting exercises and lessons is over I give to studying the intricacies of the modern game of football. You see, I have undertaken to be manager of their team. But it's such a pleasure to work for them."

"How you have changed, Mr. Roberts."

"Thanks to you, Father. That day two weeks ago when at your instance I asked them to buy me a paper was the red-letter day of my life. I shall remember it along with the day of my first communion. My eyes were opened; and I saw at length that my pupils were not mocking me."

"How you have changed, Mr. Roberts," repeated Father Noland. It was the only thing to be said.

"Changed! Why the whole world has become new, and my life is something so different from what it was that—"

Mr. Roberts finished his remark with a smile so natural, so easy, so full of happiness, that there was no need of his completing the sentence.

THE KING OF THE COLLEGE.

CHAPTER I.

*IN WHICH JOHN ROLFS, FOR GOOD AND SUFFICIENT
REASONS WISHES TO GO HOME; BUT IS PREVAILED
UPON BY THE KING OF THE COLLEGE TO
STAY THREE DAYS LONGER.*

"I CAN'T stand this much longer, Fred: the best thing I can do is to go home."

Fred Williams said nothing in reply; but his face was full of sympathy. He was seated on a bench in a remote corner of the college yard. His head was bent towards the ground, and he was digging his foot into the earth. The speaker, John Rolfs, a thin, slender, sickly-looking boy of seventeen, was pacing up and down before the bench. He was very nervous and restless. As he spoke, he stood still; but upon completing his sentence, he resumed his nervous walk. He waited for Fred Williams to reply, and, when no reply came, glanced at his friend uneasily. Fred was fretting the ground more savagely than ever. But there

was a great sympathy in his face, which spoke better than words.

Thus silently encouraged, John Rolfs went on with his plaint.

"I got used to being called 'Specksy' and 'Four-eyes,' also 'Pipestems' " (a brutal reference to the thinness of John's legs); "but the fellows won't stop at that. They have come to saluting me on occasion with cat-calls, and besides, whenever I happen to be going up-stairs with the crowd I really am kept guessing all the time as to what is going to happen to me next. Just look at this—"

Here John rolled up his shirt sleeve, revealing a forearm of many colors. Fred whistled softly, and a great heavy line cleft his forehead perpendicularly.

"Just tell me who did that!" he roared, in a tone which decidedly startled his companion.

"Why, Fred! There's a tiger in you, whereas I thought you were a lamb of purest wool serene. Indeed, if I did know, I should certainly not tell you in your present state of mind. Do you know, Fred, just now you have the expression of a bulldog on your face?"

Suddenly the heavy line disappeared, the stern features relaxed, and Fred broke out into a ringing, whole-souled laugh. It was a laugh in a mil-

lion. People who heard it never forgot it. There was no mistaking it. Behind such a laugh there could be no treachery, no insincerity; behind such a laugh there must be a heart noble, tender, true. "Ha! ha! ha!" roared Fred. "Did I scare you, John? You never saw me that way before, hey? Well, I hope you'll never see me that way again. And did I look like a bulldog—now—did I?"

"You did for all the world, Fred."

Again came the ringing laugh. Fred seemed to be restored to perfect good humor; and his countenance was now lighted up by the merry sunshine of a merry disposition. As John gazed into his eyes, he began to wonder whether it was possible that the face now before him could be the face which, but a moment ago, had been so black with passion. The two expressions which had succeeded each other so rapidly were at extremes, as far removed from each other as is the roar of the thunder from the song of the lark.

Suddenly Fred's expression changed again. He remembered the discouragement and the trouble of his friend, and with that memory returned the look of sympathy.

"But, John," he continued, "I had no idea that the fellows were so rough with you. Do you mean to tell me that those marks on your arms were put there by some of the fellows?"

"They are not only on my arm; I'm black and blue all over from the pinches and pokes I've got going up that stairway. Of course, I don't think that many fellows have anything to do with it. It's all done by the crowd that has been after me ever since I got here. But the worst of it is that the crowd seems to be getting bigger all the time. A great many fellows who let me alone at first are now beginning to pick at me too. They seem to have no respect for me at all. If I were a nigger in the days of slavery, they could hardly treat me worse than they do. Pinches and hits in the dark are bad enough; but what I find worst of all is the cold contempt I am treated with by all except a very, very few."

"And it's all my fault," groaned big, burly Fred with a face of tragic gloom. As he spoke he struck his breast a resounding thwack. "It's all my doing; I brought you here, old boy, and thought I was doing you a favor."

He groaned again. The earnestness and intensity of his distress saved it from being serio-comic.

"Now, look here, Fred," cried John, catching the clenched hand of his friend, and seating himself beside him, "don't you make me feel any worse than I do. Don't, please don't put the blame on yourself. You meant to be kind, and you *were* kind when you persuaded me to come here. If

the fellows of Maryville College don't take to me kindly, it's no fault of yours. You've been disappointed: your swan has turned out to be a goose—that's all."

"Goose, indeed," returned Fred. "I only wish I was the kind of a goose you are. Confound it! I thought I could twist the boys here around my finger; but I've missed it on this play. Of course they are all careful enough in what they say about you when I'm around; but when I'm out of sight, I'm out of mind, too. If they only knew you the way I do, John, you'd be the cock of the walk. But there's just where the trouble comes in. When you're with me, you're a different fellow. You talk like a book by the best author, and you're easy and graceful, and everything good. But when you get into a crowd you're turned into somebody else, who is left-handed and left-legged, and deaf and blind and dumb."

"That is so, Fred," assented John. "I wish I could help it, but I can't. When I get into a crowd of boys, all my self-assurance and courage seem to go oozing out at my finger-tips. You see, I'm not used to associating with boys; and, to tell the truth, I'm afraid of them. If they were grown men, I shouldn't mind: I've gone with grown men and women nearly all my life. And even if they were boys like you, I should be at my ease.

But—" here poor John broke into a weak smile—"there's only one King of the College."

"Yes, and he ought to be down and out, and there ought to be another in his place; and that other should be yourself. This King," pursued Fred grimly, "is a King without a head and without authority. King be hanged! I'd give up the title, and football and my baseball, and the whole athletic business, if I could only get the fellows to see you as you really are. I don't wonder you're discouraged and homesick, John; I'm that way myself."

"Well, to return to the point, Fred: there's no use in my getting any more unhappiness in my life than there's a good and sufficient reason for. Now here, and in the present circumstances, I cannot be happy. Why, I can't even study. If there were a prospect of any break in the clouds, I might go on grinning and bearing it. But there's nothing of the kind to look forward to, so far as I can see. Under the circumstances it seems to me that it would not be an act of cowardice on my part to go home. If I saw any good to come from my sticking it out, it would be a weakness on my part to run away; but what have I to gain by staying? I have not the same opportunities for the getting of books here as I had at home, and as for studies, they are out of the question in the present frame

of my mind. And so the misery of each day will go for nothing. There's only one reason in the world in favor of my staying, and that reason is yourself: you are the best friend I have, and it has been on your account alone that I have hesitated at all about going."

As the King of the College listened to these words there came a suspicious moisture to his eyes.

"Don't," he cried; "it hurts. What are you talking about anyhow?" he added in tones which under their roughness ill concealed his warmth of feeling. "Instead of saying that I have been your friend, you should say that you have been mine. You have done a thousand times more for me than I can ever hope to do for you. O Jerusalem! I'd like to break something."

As he gave utterance to this strong burst of emotion, Fred jumped to his feet, and brought down his clenched fist upon the back of the bench. Under the blow the board was split halfway across. To this day the boys of Maryville College point it out to the wondering newcomer.

John Rolfs gave a gasp of pain as he saw the blood upon Fred's knuckles.

"Don't mind, John," said Fred, again breaking into his jolly laugh; "I feel a hundred per cent. better. A regular old knockout blow, wasn't it?" he continued gayly, as he wrapped the injured

member in his handkerchief. "Whenever I get mad I like to hit something. Say, old boy, I don't see my way just yet; but suppose you wait three days longer. Do it for the sake of old times. Perhaps something may happen to smash that cloud you spoke of, and let the sun out. Will you do it?"

"Of course, Fred, if you ask me to. I will do anything you ask. At the same time I want you to understand that I am very anxious to get away, but still I will stay until you are just as satisfied as I am that I ought to go."

"If there is no prospect of a change in the next three days, I'll tell you to go, John, and help you to get away. Pshaw! If I thought giving a dozen or so of the boys a thrashing would do any good, I think I'd give it with a heavy hand, although I haven't had a fight since I was ten years old. I'm beginning to feel savage. Did you ever feel like breaking everything in sight? It seems to me just now that it would do me good to run up against an engine. It would spoil me, I reckon; but I would feel that I was getting what I wanted. Oh, there goes the bell for supper. Well, it's a go, is it? You stay three days more. I wish I had your brains so as to get up an idea. Say, old chap, just say a prayer for me to get one."

"All right, Fred," answered John, with something like a laugh. "You've taken the blues out of

me to such an extent that I don't think they'll come back till to-morrow. And I'm ever so grateful to you for your sympathy. It's worth suffering a lot to have a friend as true and as good as you."

CHAPTER II.

*IN WHICH THE KING OF THE COLLEGE GETS AN IDEA,
AND ASTONISHES THE YARD IN WASH-ROOM ASSEMBLED
BY PROMISING THEM AN EXHIBITION
OF FOOTBALL PLAYING FROM NONE
OTHER THAN JOHN ROLFS.*

FRED WILLIAMS, having eaten what was for him a very light supper, sought the solitude to be found at that time at the lower end of the yard. With lowered eyes and wrinkled brows he stalked up and down beside the fence which marked the "bounds;" and as he thus paced, a memorable day of the last summer came back vividly.

Here is the memory: Having spent himself and an ineffectual hour of July at mathematics (in the which he had failed at Maryville), he took the Jefferson Avenue car, and got off at the bridge connecting his native city of Detroit with Belle Isle. On reaching that best of pleasure grounds, he hired a row-boat, and was soon upon the broad bosom of the Detroit River. He was rowing tran-

quilly along the western shore of the island when he suddenly noticed that the clouds had grown heavier and blacker and were advancing swiftly. Evidently a storm was imminent. With the clouds came a gust of wind which dotted the watery expanse with a myriad of whitecaps.

He was about to turn back when his attention was arrested by the strange movements of a solitary oarsman who was seated in a boat close to the shore of the island and abreast of a mass of logs, the tops of which rose above the surface of the water. The occupant of this boat was pulling frantically at the oars, to which it answered by turning round and round as though it were fixed upon a pivot.

"It's a boy; and I guess he's caught on one of those logs that are just covered by the water," soliloquized Fred; "and judging by the way he's handling his oars he'll stay where he is for a week."

A sudden and sharp clap of thunder tore the air at this moment, and with the sound the rain came down in torrents. Whether it was the rainfall or the roar of the thunder or a combination of the two, no one can say; whatever it was, the frightened oarsman missed the water with one oar, struck it deeply with the other, and as the boat lunged violently to one side over he went into the river.

Fred, who had already directed his boat towards the young man, at once put all his strength into his strokes. He was within hailing distance when the unfortunate youth came to the surface.

"Hold on till I get to you," he shouted.

The stranger apparently did not know how to swim; but instinctively he clung to the gunwale of his boat, which was the very best thing he could have done under the circumstances. Here reason should have stepped in to help out instinct. But it did not. He next made a violent endeavor to raise himself out of the water by the leverage of the gunwale, which was the worst thing he could have done. As Fred with giant strokes reached the scene of these mishaps, there was a boat floating upside down, and its occupant was again below the surface.

"Ah!" he cried, as the face reappeared close to the stern of his boat. "You're all right, old man; catch hold there."

There was something in the tone of Fred's voice which was at once authoritative and reassuring. He was a leader of leaders.

"Good," he continued, as the half-drowned youth obeyed his directions. "There's no reason for being frightened. Stay quiet one moment longer. Now—gently. There you are."

As he thus spoke Fred, by the exercise of no

common skill and of no common strength, helped the other into the boat.

All this time the rain had been falling fast and furious; and so there was very little difference as regarded the outward plight of the two. Not even an expert could have told which of them had been immersed.

"Do you feel all right?" continued Fred, as he helped his new acquaintance to a seat in the stern.

There came no answer. The young man was sputtering and coughing and blowing. He tried to smile, but with very doubtful success.

Fred's sympathy mounted. He wished to do something to show it.

"Say," he continued, "couldn't I lend you some of my clothes? Yours are pretty wet."

The rain at this very moment was pelting upon the two occupants of the boat more mercilessly than ever. Neither of them could possibly present a more bedraggled appearance. In answer to Fred's proffer of relief, the other broke into a laugh, which, happening to run counter to a choke, ended in a violent fit of coughing.

As the absurdity of the thing dawned upon Fred he contributed to the sudden merriment by the ringing laugh which his friends loved so well.

"Excuse me," said the stranger, when he had sufficiently recovered himself, "but I couldn't

help it. I'm awfully grateful to you for what you have done for me, and I hope I shall never forget it. My name is John Rolfs."

"And mine is Fred Williams. As for what I did for you, it was only my luck that I got the chance. When I was a little fellow I used to read those books of Optic and Castlemon. The fellows in them were always saving somebody or other's life. They just didn't seem to have anything else to do but to be on hand when anybody needed saving. I used to envy them, and wish I'd been alive when people were always in danger. And now it's come just my way, and I'm ever so much obliged to you for giving me the chance."

Rolfs laughed: the laugh was chastened by a shiver.

"What about that boat of mine?" he asked.

"Oh, bother the old tub. We'll tell the boatman where to find it and go off and warm ourselves. I can hear you shivering from here. Don't you worry about it. I know the fellow who has charge of the boats, and will make it all right with him."

"Thanks, Fred; I feel as though you and I were old friends."

"Suppose," said Fred, "that we take it for granted that we've known each other for the last three weeks. Let's suppose that we've been to-

gether camping out, and that we're on the return home."

"All right," answered John, at once pleased and surprised.

"Very well," continued Fred. "By the way, you have never told me all these weeks we've been together in what part of Detroit you live."

"Do you know where the Catholic graveyard is, Fred?"

"Oh, indeed! So you live there, do you? What kind of a monument is it?"

"I didn't say I lived in the graveyard, but near it. Almost directly across the street from the main entrance."

"Well, we're nearer your house than mine. I live on Jefferson Avenue within a block or so of Delta College. Now, old fellow, as your house is the nearest, I intend to see you there."

"I should be delighted to have you; of course you'll have to change your things and take supper with me. Say, couldn't you stay all night?"

"Considering that we've been camping together for three weeks, I think we've been spending our nights in one another's company to an extent that is almost monotonous. There you are shivering again. Suppose you sit here beside me and take one of the oars; it will keep you from getting a chill."

The suggested change was made, and five minutes later the two were walking at a noticeably fast gait across the Belle Isle Bridge.

John Rolfs played the part of host to perfection. Before supper was over there was no need of keeping up the illusion that they had been off camping together; they were firm and fast friends. In the course of their talk it came out that Fred knew nothing of mathematics, and that John knew very much. This served to clinch their friendship. Every day they came together, the one as teacher, the other as pupil, with such results that when Fred returned to college he passed a brilliant examination.

All these happenings of the previous vacation returned to Fred's memory as he paced up and down the beaten path; all these and more. His own kindness to Rolfs, however, served only as a background to emphasize all that Rolfs had done for him. The hours given to making clear the problems which had once seemed hopelessly insoluble to Fred, the kindly words of encouragement, the stimulus of a sympathetic friend—these reflections filled the heart of the generous young giant with love and gratitude. But what was to be done? There came no answer to this question.

Finally Fred seated himself and fell into what is called a brown study. The days were still long,

and so the yard, at the further end especially, was plentifully peopled with the senior students. Many were passing baseballs, a large number were taking their turn at catching and fielding the flies and grounders which the prefect, a most skilful hand at the bat, was knocking for their benefit. Knots of boys were gathered in various quarters of the yard, one group making a distinctly unsuccessful attempt to sing "After the Ball" in parts.

All these sights, along with the various sounds, fell idly upon the senses of Fred. But his attention was finally aroused when there came forth from the gymnasium some fourteen or fifteen young men arrayed in the ungainly football suit. The college team's first practice of the year was about to begin.

"Say, Fred," called out Somers, the newly elected captain of the team, "come on and join us, won't you?"

Fred smiled and shook his head.

"Come on, Fred," called a dozen voices.

"You can count on me for the class games, boys, but I can't afford to go on the regular team."

Captain Somers was not satisfied.

"Look here, Fred," he began, as he threw himself beside the King of the College, "can't I induce you to change your mind? We've got the best

team on record in the history of this college; but if you promise to play with us, we'll be simply invincible. Can't you promise to come into it for the sake of old friendship?"

"If it were a matter of good will simply, Somers, you wouldn't have to ask me twice. But I have a reason which I have told no one—at least no boy. If I were to tell any one, it would be you. Of course I like football well enough; fact is, I like it too well. Why, I'm just wild to play; but I won't, and I can't, and there's an end of it, old fellow."

"But don't you remember last year, Fred, when we tried to get you to come in with us how you gave us a sort of promise that you might help us out this year?"

"Yes, I do. But things have not turned out as I hoped, and I have no more right to play now than I had then."

"Now, Fred, please don't be offended; if there's any difficulty about money, you know there's any number of us fellows who would be only too glad to help you out to any—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Fred. "It isn't a question of money; but I'll tell you in a general sort of a way what it is."

"What?" cried the captain breathlessly.

"It's a most solemn mystery," answered the King, again exploding with laughter.

"Well, come on with me anyhow, and help me give some of our new players some pointers."

Still bubbling over with laughter Fred arose and accompanied Somers to the scene of practice.

Fred took no part in the various manœuvres, but contented himself with throwing out now a hint, now a word of encouragement. Most of the players acquitted themselves in this, the first practice of the year, very creditably. A few showed signs of nervousness; only one gave promise of being an utter failure. He was practising for the position of left half-back. He had been the best player of the junior division in the preceding year, and great hopes had been placed upon the help which he would afford in filling the position to which he had been assigned. Although very light, he more than compensated for this "football" defect by his speed and his activity.

Now that he was on trial he fully realized all expectations as regarded his ability in the way of running around the ends. But in bucking the line he was disappointing. He ran forward quickly and dashing;ly it is true, but all his dash and push and vim seemed to fail him at the very moment when it should be most employed, to wit, at the moment of collision. The captain tried him at various parts of the line, but when it came to making a gain all the opposing forwards seemed to be

the same to the new member of the eleven. In vain did Fred urge him on, in vain did he pour suggestions into his ear. Failure continued to follow failure, and the young player began to show by his features that he was losing heart.

Fred was distressed. He could not see another's pain unmoved.

"You're all right, Joe Kelly," he said, "only you've missed the hang of the thing. But I think you and I together can get it," he added as he pulled off his coat. "Now, if you fellows have no objection I'll guard Joe in the next play, and Jones can go back on the line. I just want to get Kelly into the trick of putting in the full force of his dash just when he hits the line."

Jones went to the left end, and Fred took his place beside Kelly.

"You're just a little nervous, Joe," whispered Fred. "All you need to do this time is to put down your head and keep right on."

Fred's order was obeyed. Joe, in lowering his head, missed a sight that, had he seen it, might have haunted him in his sleep for a week to come. As Fred advanced his features took on the "bulldog" look. The guard and tackle towards whom he was fiercely moving looked as though they wished it were supper time and all were well. This look, however, did not have a chance to

settle upon their faces, for they went over like so many ten-pins the next instant, and Joe Kelly was ten feet beyond the point where he had hit the line.

A chorus of approbation came from players and onlookers. Kelly was again a prime favorite. Fred smiled.

"It is not always the fellow who carries the ball that does the work," he said to himself; *"but all the same he's the fellow who gets the praise."*

There's a very good allegory in this thought.

When Fred, some minutes later, resumed his coat, he walked away with the assurance that Kelly had gained the requisite confidence and the knack of "hitting the line." The short practice had played havoc with his collar, and he repaired to the wash-room to remedy this defect in his evening toilet. The first bell for evening studies had just sounded, and a number of students were gathered in the room.

Among them was John Rolfs.

"Halloa, John," cried Fred in a loud and cheerful voice. But even as he spoke he noticed that there was a strange expression on his friend's face. With an air of concern and in a lower voice he added: "What's the matter? Anything gone wrong?"

"Oh, it's the old story," came the answer. "I'll

tell you about it some other time." And John left the wash-room.

Several of the boys acknowledged his departure with cat-calls and other more or less articulate expressions of their derision and contempt.

Again the "bulldog" expression came upon the face of the King of the College. Those who perceived it were quick to take the hint, and to convey by pokes and gestures a warning to their fellows.

"What's the matter now?" asked Fred of Martin Fay, one of his classmates.

"They've been working old Rolfs again," answered Martin. "They made him wash under difficulties. There was a good deal of soap in his hair-brush, and when he tried to get some water it turned out that his wash-basin was a sieve."

"It's too bad," commented Fred. "Why don't you fellows give the boy a chance? You're all down on him."

"Well, it's a case of mutual want of admiration," explained Martin. "You see, Fred, he doesn't like us and we don't like him. He is always going about with his nose in the air, and he doesn't take the least interest in games. Of course we don't expect him to do anything himself, but at least he might show that he doesn't look down on us."

"That's all tommyrot," retorted Fred. "How

can you expect a fellow to take interest in anything if you keep him on the ragged edge all the time? And suppose a boy doesn't take interest in games, and doesn't choose to play them, what business is it of yours? If John Rolfs wanted to play he could give you fellows a few pointers."

This was a hard saying even though it came from the King of the College. The laugh of incredulity was heard from every quarter of the wash-room.

The King glared about indignantly. He was not thinking of himself, but of his friend. As he gazed there came to him an inspiration:

"You think I'm talking nonsense, do you? Just wait till we Rhetoricians play the picked football team of the Poetry and Humanity classes. Then you'll see something that will make you open your eyes."

"Is Rolfs going to play with your class?" asked one of the Poets, while the others fastened their inquiring eyes upon Fred.

"Yes, he is, and he's going to play right half-back."

There was a titter which was barely respectful.

"Oh, of course," growled the King, "there's no chance of his getting any justice from you fellows. But just wait till you see him on the gridiron and you'll change your opinion in a hurry."

"Do you mean to say, Fred, that Rolfs can play

football?" asked Burke, the best player of the Humanities class.

"If he wants to, he can play anything," returned Fred. "That boy has brains, and brains are the best thing in the market. Some of you fellows will open your eyes before the end of that game."

The listeners were impressed. Anything from the King on the question of athletics weighed much with them. There was a moment of silence.

"All the same," objected Martin, "it's pretty hard to imagine that a boy who has bad eyes and stooped shoulders and a poor physique is able, even with the best will in the world, to play a decent game of football."

"You don't need to imagine anything about it. Just wait till the time comes and see for yourselves." And with this the King of the College left the wash-room.

He had produced a sensation.

CHAPTER III.

*IN WHICH THE KING OF THE COLLEGE INDUCES ROLFS
TO PLAY RIGHT HALF-BACK.*

"JOHN, I believe that you trust me."

"Why, of course I do, Fred," replied Rolfs, taking out his pocketbook. "Anything that's mine is yours. If you want—"

"You're barking up the wrong tree, old boy," laughed Fred. "I am talking about your trusting my judgment."

"Whatever you say goes," laughed John.

"Do you mean it?" asked Fred eagerly.

"I mean it without any reservation."

"Then listen. I thought the thing over last night, and I see my way clear. You are to stay here till this day two weeks, the day of the class game between our class of Rhetoric and the combined talent of the Poetry and Humanity classes."

"Very well, Fred. As I remarked just now, whatever you say goes."

"But that's not all," continued Fred, now showing signs of nervousness. "You are not only to stay till then, but you are to take part in the game."

It was now John's turn to laugh.

"Oh, but I mean it," continued Fred. "You are going to play half-back."

"Eh?" gasped John, taking off his glasses and looking at his friend with rounded eyes.

"I was never more serious in my life."

"But, my dear sir, I know as much about football as I do about Syro-Chaldaic."

"Yes; but I know pretty much all about football, and I am with you."

"Nonsense. You don't want me to make a show of myself before the whole college."

"But you are not going to make a show of yourself."

"It's out of the question, Fred. You might as well ask me to set the river on fire."

"Didn't you say a minute ago that you trusted my judgment without reservation?"

"I did then; but I never dreamed that you would think of my trying to play football."

"Now listen, John. The fellows here have an idea that you are no good at games."

"And they are perfectly correct in that same idea," interpolated Rolfs blandly.

"And what's more, they think you have a contempt for games, and even for those who excel in them."

"Which isn't at all so. I envy those fellows who are so active on their feet. As to taking interest

in the games, the fact is I am too ignorant of the fine points to say much."

"Well, here you have a chance to kill two birds with one pebble. If you go into this game you will show that you do not despise those who play, and, if things work the way I intend them, you will show that you are a good player."

Rolfs put on the face of utter astonishment.

"There's no use in reasoning about this matter," continued Fred; "the only question is, will you put yourself in my hands without reserve?"

Still John Rolfs hesitated.

"I have asked people a good many favors in my life, but I never asked one with so much anxiety to be heard as this. John, old fellow, you know that I'm your friend, and you know that I wouldn't do anything to make you unhappy. Now I've got something that I don't get any too often: I've got a real live genuine idea, and I'm just dying to work it. If you trust me I'm sure that it will come out all right. Last night I lay awake in bed for three hours thinking it out. To-day I intend to keep on thinking at it, because I haven't got all the details pat yet. But it's sure, almost, to be a success. The one thing needful is that you put your trust in me, and no matter how foolish I may seem to be, no matter what I do, you must take it for granted that I know what I'm doing. You

may think that I'm awful cheeky. It is pretty bold to ask a fellow to stop reasoning and let a dunce do all the thinking. But that's just exactly what I ask, and I ask it because I see my way to scoring a big success for you. Now, once for all, won't you please trust me?"

Instead of answering Rolfs held out his hand.

Fred shook it with a cordiality which caused the other to wince. The compact was sealed.

"By George," roared Fred in a perfect explosion of voice, "you'd be astonished if you knew how proud I am. To have a fellow like you trust a good-for-nothing sort of a chump like me is just—is just—*hush!*"

The two separated in the happiest of moods: Fred because he was so trusted, John because he was so dear to the heart of the noblest boy he had ever met.

Fred was wont to strike while the iron was hot. Entering the college reading-room he seated himself beside Somers and entered into whispered conversation with him.

"Say, Somers, I want you to do me a great favor."

"I think you can count on me," answered the football captain quietly. "What is it, Fred?"

"First of all, it's to be a dead secret between you and me."

"Why, this is getting interesting. Do you want me to swear a swear?"

"Your word is enough. Let me begin at the beginning. You remember last evening how Kelly was getting discouraged, and how you and I took him in hand and braced him on both sides and brought him whirling into and through the line?"

"Yes; and I appreciated your kindness in coming to the help of the poor fellow. He had practically lost courage, and would have resigned from the team if you had not taken him in hand at the last moment. You had not helped him for more than two or three plays when he became a new man. You're the prince of trainers, Fred."

"Oh, let that go. The point I want to get at is this: The first time you and I brought Kelly swinging through the line he really deserved no credit at all. He carried the ball, and we did the rest."

"Excuse me, it was you and not I that did the rest. When the fellows saw you swinging into them they were gone at once; I have seen no player yet who smashes into the line as you do."

"At all events, the fact of the matter is that in a play of that kind it is the fellow with the ball who, in nine cases out of ten, gets the credit of the play."

"Yes, that's so. Even men who know the points of the game are often deceived. Why, even yesterday afternoon in the play you speak of, Kelly got all the credit of that gain, from more than two-thirds of the players who were on the spot and had every opportunity of seeing exactly what happened."

"Well, after the practice I got to thinking of that little point, and it gave me a light. Why couldn't we bring John Rolfs into a game and give him a sort of send-off with the boys?"

It was now Somers' turn to stare and gasp. He was more astonished than even John Rolfs had been.

"Oh, say; you don't call that an idea, do you?"

"The very best I ever got. You and I are to see him through, and the others are to know nothing about it."

"But, my dear fellow, the thing is absurd. We might be able to throw dust in the eyes of the crowd for one or two plays, but they would see through the scheme in less than ten minutes, and poor Rolfs would be guyed more after the game than he had been before."

"There *is* a difficulty about pulling the thing off, I grant," assented Fred, "but where there's a will there's a way. I don't see the end of it clearly yet; all I ask of you is to help me bring him through

the line just once. You do that and I'll attend to the rest."

"I'm afraid it won't work; in fact, I'm sure it will be a failure," said Somers. "Of course, I don't want to make a fool of myself—not to speak of making a fool of poor Rolfs."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Somers. If you agree to back me up in this thing I'll promise to play with the college team in any one of the outside games you may choose."

Somers gave a whoop of joy, and was immediately fined twenty-five cents by the censor on duty in the reading-room and requested to go outside.

"You can make it fifty if you like," said Somers cheerfully. "Good-by; I'm going outside where I can yell. Come on, Fred; you're the best fellow I've met in a coon's age. Do I agree?" he continued as they issued into the yard; "well, I should say so. Just fix up your plans and I'll back you up to the death. Oh, but this is good. When the State University team comes along it won't know what's happened to it. Just think! For the first time since you've been coming to our college—that's five years, isn't it?—you are going to take part in a game with an outside team! And under my captainship, too. Excuse me, Fred, I must run off and tell the other fellows."

A moment later a loud cheer came from a dozen and odd young men who stood grouped together in the shade of the class-room building. The good news had been told, and in five minutes the whole yard was in a state of jubilation. The King of the College meanwhile had sought the solitude of the chapel. He was praying earnestly for two things: first, that he might see his way clearly to carrying out his plan with regard to John; and secondly, that his taking part in the game against the University team might not lead to the one thing which he most dreaded. None of the boys who cheered and rejoiced had the least idea of the terrible sacrifice which the King of the College had made for the sake of his friend. None of them save that friend was destined to learn the secret of Fred's repugnance.

CHAPTER IV.

A FOOTBALL GAME WITH A FAMOUS RUN.

It was the day for the much-talked-of game.

The Poetry-Humanities class had the kick-off. The ball was kicked low, and came on a line towards Fred, who was well down the field. John was standing beside him. He had received his instructions previously to the play.

"If the ball comes this way," Fred had told him, "leave it to me. The moment I catch it, get hold of my arm and run with me. Keep your free arm doubled and stiff."

John tried to obey, and, as Fred caught the ball and slipped it under his arm, he moved up beside his friend and was about to take a hold of him when he was very suddenly forestalled, for Fred caught him and was speeding along at a rate which made it very inconvenient for the delicate guard of whom he had, as it were, taken possession.

Burke, one of the most powerful fellows of the Humanities class, was the first to meet them. As they came within a few feet of him, poor Rolfs was shot out from that protecting and powerful arm straight and hard into Burke; and as the two, both in a state of violent astonishment, proceeded to pick themselves up, Fred swept on for a gain of fifteen yards more, five of them being made in the very teeth of nearly the entire opposing team.

"I say," cried Burke, "this is the surprise party of the season. Where did you get that trick of running a fellow down?"

Rolfs smiled faintly; he was as yet in no condition to talk.

"It was done in the most scientific way imaginable; most fellows when they try that sort of thing

make a foul or a failure, but you kept right within the letter of the law. I congratulate you."

"What in the world is the boy talking about?" queried John to himself. "And what in the world did Fred mean by hurling me off in that fashion? I fancy I understand now how a cannon ball would feel, if it could, when it is shot out of the mouth of a cannon."

When Rolfs took his place behind the line in preparation for the next play several threw him smiles and nods of approbation. The crowd of college boys in attendance were wondering and dubious. They had been venting their jibes and boyish sarcasm upon him but a moment before, but now they were quiet.

John could hear his name passing from mouth to mouth, but there was a marked change in the tone. One small boy with a voice that carried far and wide remarked:

"By George, old Spindle Shanks isn't such a rotten player after all!"

While the team was still lined up Fred whispered a word in his friend's ear:

"By Jove, John, we're in luck. I handled you pretty roughly, didn't I? I did it on the spur of the moment, and now nearly every fellow here thinks that you know something about football. I'll have to handle you roughly again; but remem-

ber what I told you last night: no matter what I do, you must take it on faith that I am doing the right thing."

"Whatever you do goes," answered John.

"In this next play, John, make a bluff at being in it if you can. You needn't do anything; but get into the crowd, or rather behind it, and act as though you were pushing."

Poor John tried to carry out these simple instructions, but, if the truth must be told, he looked so hopelessly lost and out of place that several of the spectators who had been watching him closely began to ask him whether his mother knew he was out, whether he had any idea of which way the goal lay, how about trying a game of marbles, and the like.

In the succeeding play the King of the College went through the line for a gain of thirteen yards. The gain was great, and yet it was done with ease, even with grace—a way of performing which one neither expects nor desires in the Rugby game.

"What's the matter with that big fellow?" asked an old and once famous Yale player of a professor. "Is he lazy, or what? Why, if he wanted to he'd be going yet. If he were to get excited goodness knows what would happen. He's a born football player; one can see that in spite of his lackadaisical style."

"I don't know what's the matter with Fred to-day," answered the professor. "I never saw him play before. He's a powerful fellow—the King of the College, they call him, and, being very tender-hearted, it may be that he is trying not to hurt any one."

"That's it," said a small boy, who, having heard that the young man in conversation with the professor had once played half-back on the Yale eleven, had come up to examine him closely and artlessly from head to foot. "The big fellows who know all about Fred say that he never does more than half try to play. He laughs and jokes, and never lets himself loose unless when he's making a run on a clear field."

"Indeed!" said the Yale man putting much interest into his voice.

"That's so, sir. They say that if Fred ever lets himself loose it will be worth going miles to see."

"And I believe they are right; that fellow would be an ornament to any team in the country, barring none."

Meantime Fred and Captain Somers had been hurriedly conversing.

"There are just about thirty yards left, Somers. Now's our time. Call the ball out for Rolfs, and tell the quarter to be sure not to throw it to him, but to place it safe in his hands. For good-

ness' sake, Somers, play as you never played in your life, and it's sure to go."

Before the signal was given Fred slipped over to the spot where John Rolfs was standing and whispered in his ear:

"Now, old fellow, all you need to do is to hold on tight to the ball and keep on your legs as much as you can. Please don't mind anything I do; you will understand everything later. Perhaps it would be a good thing if you were to shut your eyes once you have started off with the ball."

"Very well," answered John absently. He was too nervous to comprehend fully these directions, and too excited to notice the strange expression of his friend. The King of the College had grown deathly pale; anxiety, fear, pity were written in large letters upon his expressive face. One would think that he was bidding John Rolfs a last and an eternal farewell. His set jaws and his compressed lips showed, however, that he was fully master of himself.

When Fred, after these whispered conferences, fell back into his place a wave of whispered excitement passed among the spectators. A substitute of the Rhetoricians eleven heard the signal and translated it.

"Rolfs is going to carry the ball." These were the magic words that passed from lip to lip. An

eager silence settled upon all. Fred had asserted many a time in the past week that Rolfs could go through the line for a big gain as well as any boy in the college. The assertion, it is scarcely necessary to say, had been invariably received with a laugh; but Fred had been so insistent that many had come to wonder whether there could possibly be some shadow of truth in it. No wonder, then, that excitement became tense. Perhaps a great sensation was awaiting those present. If so, all were on guard to catch and note its every detail.

The signal was given, and John Rolfs took three strides towards the quarter-back who, as he turned, dropped the ball safe and secure in his hands.

After that John hardly knew what happened. He was conscious of two big strong arms enfolding him, one arm on either side, in a rib-cracking embrace; he was conscious of a massive, passionate face belonging to the stronger arm looming over him, and he was frightened. Good heavens! could that be the face of Fred Williams? The "bulldog" expression was there—the bulldog expression with an added fierceness, unimaginable unless seen. It was an awful face—fierce, brutal, hard, without a single redeeming trait. It is with such a face that the murderer rushes upon his victim from behind and inflicts the deadly blow; with such a face that

the terrible deeds of wrong, of bitter cruelty, are wrought by men who have steeled their hearts to every touch of pity.

John Rolfs had seen enough; he closed his eyes and prayed.

Meantime the spectators were screaming and yelling at the top of their voices. This is what they saw:

John Rolfs took the ball, placed it under his arm, and with the King of the College guarding him on the right and the captain of the team on the left, plunged into the very heart and centre of the opposing line. Then that strong line bent and wavered and broke. Three players bit the dust, and over their prostrate bodies went the dauntless trio. The opposing quarter-back met them as they passed their prostrate foes, and (how it happened no one knew at the time) went flying into the air with a motion that just failed of being a complete somersault. Meantime the three locked figures swept on.

And now came the full-back of the Poetry-Humanities team into the play. He was, with perhaps the single exception of Fred, the best tackler in the college. Avoiding the two guards, he dashed straight at the legs of John Rolfs, and caught them securely above the knees. In a trice the four were lying a confused mass upon the ground.

Every one thought that the play was over, and the yelling was redoubled.

Suddenly a silence fell upon all. Some invisible force sent the full-back sprawling to one side, and the three were up and off again. For the ensuing thirty or forty seconds the onlookers lost sight of the great trio. Both teams within five yards of the goal stood heaped and jammed together—a struggling, pushing, feverish mass of maddened players. Again there was a move onward. One opposing player suddenly described a parabolic curve, a second went flying to one side with an impetus that sent him flat on the ground, and through the opening with a yell that sounded like a fierce war-cry came Fred, still firmly grasping John Rolfs. The captain was not with them any longer. Just now he was securely pinned down by two men who were firmly convinced that he had the ball under his arm. Rolfs was hardly able to stand upon his legs. Though the spectators, at least most of them, did not notice it, he was practically a dead weight in the hands of his guard. Within a yard of the goal two men sprang at them. They met and clashed, and before any other player could come upon the scene, down went all four upon the goal line, and the first touch-down of the game had been scored within five minutes from the time of calling play.

“Hurrah for John Rolfs,” cried a powerful voice.

Cheer upon cheer rent the air.

And now let us return to the hero of the hour. We left him with his eyes closed and advancing, for all he knew, to certain destruction. One thing he managed to keep in mind as he moved on: that was to hold to the ball under any and all circumstances. Presently he felt that he was making a stepping-stone of human bodies to advance. Before he could feel quite as uncomfortable as he ought to in such circumstances he was advancing swiftly upon what seemed to be a clear field. Suddenly his football nose was digging into the ground, and somebody was holding on to his legs with a desperate tenacity. He opened his eyes and saw the full-back of the opposing team, who had just brought him to earth, saw the face—such a face!—of Fred, and closed them again. He felt that he did not care to see anything more.

Then there seemed to be an earthquake, with his poor legs as the centre of the seismic disturbance and presto! he was up again with only one arm to help him on.

“Hold on to the ball, tight,” cried a fierce voice in his ear. And Rolfs held on so tenaciously and with so absorbing a purpose that he forgot to use his legs, and hung almost a dead weight upon the King of the College.

“Move! move!” hissed the same fierce voice. It

was hard to believe that such tones could issue from the mouth of Fred Williams.

John essayed to move. For the ensuing minute he knew not what happened. People came thumping against his body; hands grasped his legs and slipped away, heavy feet came down upon his toes, and meantime, amidst it all, stronger, more powerful, he felt that terrible arm which never for a moment loosened its grasp. It pulled and tugged and guided and directed. At last, still holding the ball, he was again down flat upon the ground, and for the first time since he had started forth upon this terrible run the strong arm loosened its hold. Instinctively he opened his eyes. Never shall he forget the horror of the sight that greeted him. Fred's face was close to his. His lips were touched with foam, his eyes appeared to be bloodshot and were blazing with fury. Even as he looked, the hand which had so long supported him suddenly shot forth straight at his unprotected face. The blow fell, and for a second or two John knew no more. All this happened at the very moment that the goal-line was reached, and so quickly was it done that no one save Rolfs himself saw the blow.

"Time!" yelled Fred. "Rolfs is knocked out."

He bent close down to the runner, who lay prone and motionless.

"Are you hurt, old fellow?" he asked.

But there was no answer.

Fred caught him up in his arms. A subdued sound of horror went through players and spectators. Rolfs' face was covered with blood, and the drops, as Fred held him up to their gaze, were falling to the ground.

"One moment, boys," continued Fred. "I'll run over with him to the infirmary. He's done his share in winning this game. Feel better, old fellow?" he asked as Rolfs opened his eyes.

Without waiting for an answer he hastened away.

The most sensational football play of the year had been made, and John Rolfs was the hero of the hour.

CHAPTER V.

*IN WHICH JOHN ROLFS CHANGES HIS MIND AND REMAINS
AT COLLEGE.*

"How are you, John?" cried Fred, bursting into the infirmary ward.

"Who won?" exclaimed John.

Fred broke into his jolly laugh. He stopped abruptly when the Brother infirmarian opened the door.

"Oh, I beg pardon, Brother; I really couldn't help myself. Would you believe it? John Rolfs here is developing into a dead game sport. Instead of telling me how he felt, his first question was, 'Who won?' Well, the fact is, John, we won hands down; score twenty-four to nothing. But that's merely a detail of the game. The great victory was yours. YOU won, old boy. You've beaten the whole college. There's not a boy here who isn't willing to swear by you."

"What did I do anyhow?"

"Do! You made a run of thirty yards through the centre and all the way into goal."

"But good heavens, Fred, you know that I had nothing to do with that. I was like a baby in your arms."

"Don't you believe it. You held to that ball as though it were glued to you. And then the way you kicked and struggled along surprised me."

"Did I really?"

"You certainly did, at least up to within twelve or thirteen yards of the goal. Then you were winded and dazed. But you did a thousand times better than I thought you would."

"But, I say, Fred, what did you mean by giving me that outrageous thump on the nose? Of course I trust you; but isn't it pretty hard for a fellow to

see his friend glaring like a savage into his face while he gives him a punch which shows him a million stars?"

"Your nose does look a little big," admitted Fred with a shade of sorrow in his tones. "That blow, John, was the pet part of my little scheme. You see, if you were to play through the game everybody would find out your weak points. Now I felt sure that I could show you off to advantage in a single play, and my idea was to put you out of the game in a blaze of glory. The nose, while it is a tender organ, can stand a good blow, and show better for the amount of harm done than any organ of the human frame. For the last week I have had it in my mind to give you that bang; but it was one of the hardest things I ever did. I've been praying for a week for courage to do it. I can't bear to hit any fellow in cold blood, and the idea of striking you made me feel sick. Before we began that run through the lines I felt as though I were going to faint. In fact, from the time play began till I laid you out on the goal-line I spent the very worst quarter of an hour I ever had since I played my first game of football. That was before I came to college. I had a high temper then, and in the excitement of a game, I injured a player pretty seriously—broke his collar bone. The accident frightened me very much. I then made up

my mind not to take part in any serious contests till I was quite sure of my temper."

"Oh!" exclaimed John, sitting up in bed; "so that's the reason that the boys can't induce you to take part in any outside contests."

"Exactly; I have been afraid all along that my temper might get the better of me, and—I'm pretty powerful, John—there might be a serious accident for which I might be obliged to reproach myself all the days of my life. But I'm not afraid any more, John; at last I feel pretty sure of my temper."

"You do! Oh, how I wish you could have seen yourself during the run we made together. Such a face! Why, it was enough to stop a lightning express. Bulldog was no name for it. Honestly, you looked for all the world like a midnight assassin!"

"Ha! ha! ha! go on," roared Fred. "That's good! Tell me some more."

"One look at your face, Fred, and I was only too glad to close my eyes. After passing through a cyclone and getting whirled round in a maelstrom I opened them again, and saw your face once more. I shut them at once, and was more frightened than I had been the first time. Then I got into an earthquake, a steamboat explosion, and a railway collision, and ended up by dropping from a balloon.

I thought it was about time to open my eyes once more, and bid farewell to earth. And there you were again glaring into my eyes with a look of deadly and implacable hate upon your bulldog horror of a face. You were breathing like a third-class villain in a second-class tragedy. There was foam on your lips and blood in your eye. Then you raised your clenched fist and made an awful jab at my face, and I shut my eyes again. The next thing I knew you were holding me in your arms, and addressing the mob. Temper! If you call that keeping your temper, words have no meaning."

"If you don't stop that roaring of yours," whispered the Brother infirmarian, again putting in his head at the door, "I shall have to order you back to your ward, Mr. Williams."

"Beg pardon, Brother; but John was telling me how I looked in a football rush and how he felt himself while I was helping him to plough up the gridiron, and it would take the seriousness out of a tombstone to listen to him. But I'll be quiet if you let me stay a few minutes longer."

The Brother withdrew smilingly. In his eyes, as in the eyes of all the boys, Fred was indeed the King of the College.

"Well, John," Fred continued. "I wasn't really mad at all during that rush, but I was intensely

excited—never was more so in my life. In the first place, I had made up my mind that I was going to bring you within the goal-line or be carried off the field. In the second place, I wanted to make my plays in such a way that the people looking on couldn't tell exactly how everything happened; that was the hardest thing of all, and kept my attention on a fearful strain. In the third place, I was to give you at the end of it all a crack on the nose which was intended to stun you a trifle and make you bleed freely. I may play ball for ten years more, but I'll never again exert myself anything like what I did in that one play. And what's more, John, I wouldn't do it for any other fellow but you."

John reached out his hand; for a moment there was the silence which is more eloquent than speech.

"All the same, Fred, I'm going to tell the boys, if the thing comes up, that the glory of that play all belongs to you; surely you don't want me to sail under false colors?"

John was about to speak when the noise as of the moving of many feet was heard without.

"Is somebody hurt?" asked John anxiously. "It sounds as though they were carrying some one in."

Before more could be said there came a knock.

or rather a tattoo at the door, and in marched the Rhetoric class in a body.

"We've come to see the hero of the hour," said Captain Somers, while his companions struggled to shake hands with Rolfs.

"It's all a mistake," protested John as one by one they wrung his hand with a warmth that caused him to wince. "I had nothing to do with it. Somers and Fred here just carried me along, and all I had to do was to hold on to the ball."

"You're suffering from an excess of modesty," said Somers. "Of course we did our share, too. But the way you ploughed along and held on to that ball when a dozen fellows were trying to pull you apart was a caution."

It was in vain for John to protest. His reputation for ball playing was established, and the more he decried his share in the play the more did his classmates admire him. Even Somers, who was Fred's confederate in the trick, was sincere in his expressions of admiration and congratulation.

As the party was about to take its leave Fred made them a little speech.

"I just want to say one thing, boys," he began. "John Rolfs has played his last game. He's a friend of mine, and I'm going to see to it that he doesn't go on the gridiron any more. He's naturally sickly, and isn't built for so rough a game as

football. I got him to appear for this occasion just to show you what he could do if he wanted to. However, I'm going to take his place myself. Hereafter I intend to play with the regular college team."

Shortly after this announcement the infirmarian again entered and ordered the boys outside.

"Ah," sighed John Rolfs, "if I only had Fred's heart."

"I wish," cried Fred at almost the same moment, as he walked towards the yard in the midst of the joyous Rhetoricians, "that I had just a little bit of John Rolfs' head."

* * * * *

Three months have passed. There are now two kings in the college, and these kings are as one. It is a union of head and of heart. Fred's influence is strong as ever; but it is supplemented by the influence of John Rolfs. Under the leadership of these twain there is a spirit in the college nobler than ever prevailed there before.

John has no longer any thought of going home. He is happy in the real sense of the word. True, he takes no active part in athletics, but whenever there is a game of any kind in progress he is at hand as umpire or as referee, and his judgment is invariably received with perfect acquiescence. He derives, moreover, as much enjoyment from the

successes of Fred upon the gridiron and the diamond as though they were his own achievements.

Fred has performed many a feat since the day of that memorable game; but there is nothing in his college career which gives him more satisfaction than his success in dragging John Rolfs over the goal and into the lasting esteem of the students of Maryville College.

LOOKING FOR SANTA CLAUS.

I.

ON Christmas eve towards nightfall, Johnnie Graham and his sister Minnie were curled up on the floor near the kitchen stove, looking over the pictures in an old magazine. Little Minnie was explaining the pictures to her brother. The Kansas wind was howling about the house, and driving the snow against the window-panes. Without all was darkness, save for the few lights to the west, where lay the village of St. Maure's. At a table beside the children Mrs. Graham was washing the dishes.

"Halloa!" cried Johnnie, jumping to his feet. "I hear some one a coming." And he rushed eagerly to the door.

The sound of feet shuffling through the snow was followed by an impatient knock. Johnnie threw open the door, and found himself facing a man with a telegram in his hand.

"It's for your father, and immediate." And with these words the messenger disappeared into the darkness.

"I hope it is not bad news," said Mrs. Graham.

"May I run to the stable, and bring it to papa?" cries Johnnie.

"Yes, dear."

"And may I go too, mamma?" asks Minnie.

Forthwith at the mother's nod the two go tripping through the snow, and soon reach the stable, a stout structure distant a stone's throw from the house.

There are four horses in it—one of them, Witch Winnie, is the finest horse in the West. Mr. Graham is a lover of horses.

"Papa, here's a telegram," cries Johnnie.

"And it's marked immediate," adds Minnie.

Mr. Graham, who had been fondly stroking his favorite racer, hurried from the stall, and tore open the enclosure. His face changed as he read these words:

"TOPEKA, KANSAS.

"Your sister is dying and calls for you—not an hour to spare.

JOHN TALBOT."

"Is it something bad, papa?" asks Minnie, catching her father's right hand, while Johnnie, saying nothing, but looking no less sympathetic, takes the other.

"Yes, your auntie is very sick, and I have just about three-quarters of an hour to get ready and take the train. Come, little ones, we must tell mother at once."

"Surely it never rains but it pours," exclaimed Mrs. Graham on hearing the news. "Yesterday poor John was called away to the side of his dying mother in Kansas City."

John was their man of all work, a steady, faithful young fellow, who, after his love for each and every one of the Grahams, was devoted heart and soul to the horses.

"I don't like to leave you alone on any night, my dear," said Mr. Graham, "but especially on Christmas night."

"But you must go to Annie's side; and besides I'm not afraid. Everything is secure. We've lived here now for over two years, and nothing has gone wrong."

"And, papa, if you go, do you think Santa Claus will come?" asked Johnnie anxiously.

"Why, of course. I've sent him word that I've put the Christmas tree in the hay-loft, so that he won't make the mistake of coming to our house. To-morrow when you and Minnie wake up you may run over to the stable, and you'll find out that Santa Claus can get through the stoutest door in Kansas, even though it has the strongest kind of a lock."

"And, papa," said Minnie, "what time does Santa Claus come?"

"Oh, about twelve o'clock."

Half an hour later Mr. Graham was kissing them all farewell.

"Papa, may I keep the key of the stable?" asked Johnnie.

"Here it is: don't lose it, my little man."

"And may we go over and see Witch Winnie just once more to-night, papa?" chimed in Minnie.

"Of course. Well, good-by, dear, and God bless you."

II.

JOHNNIE had been sleeping for some hours in his little cot when Minnie tiptoed into the room.

"Johnnie," she whispered at his ear.

The boy turned uneasily.

"Johnnie," she whispered again.

"What's the matter? Is it Christmas?"

"O Johnnie," she continued as the boy sat up in bed, "it's just eleven o'clock."

"I want to go to sleep. Go 'way," said the brother, lying down again.

"But wouldn't you like to see Santa Claus?"

"What!" cried the lad, leaping out of his bed.

"You know, papa said he would come about midnight. I haven't been able to sleep for thinking of it. Let us go over to the stable, and keep perfectly quiet, and maybe we shall see him."

"We dasn't go," said Johnnie.

"Yes, we may go," answered Minnie. "Don't you remember that I asked papa to go over and see Witch Winnie to-night?"

"That's so."

A few minutes later two little forms glided over the snow, unlocked the door, and slipped into the stable.

"Shall we leave the door open for Santa Claus?" asked Johnnie.

"I think not," Minnie answered. "It might hurt his feelings."

Johnnie locked the door.

"O-o-o-oh! It's dark in here: I'm afraid."

"Sh!" cried Minnie. "I have matches, dear, and we can light the candles, if we wish. But then Santa Claus might see that you and I were watching for him, and then maybe he would be displeased. Come, let us get in Witch Winnie's stall, and climb into the manger. She'll be company for us."

Witch Winnie gave a little neigh of joy when she felt the hands of her two dearest little friends caressing her. Then there was an unbroken silence.

One minute passed—though Johnnie thought it an hour—when a stealthy step was heard without.

"He's coming!" cried Minnie, breathing quickly.

The steps ceased at the door: then there came a low whistle.

At the sound Witch Winnie gave another neigh of joy.

"Why, even our horse is glad that Santa Claus is coming," whispered Johnnie.

"Sh!" hissed Minnie.

For a minute or two there was a fumbling at the lock.

"I think I'll go and help Santy," whispered Johnnie. "Maybe he's not used to that kind of a lock."

He was about to leap from the manger to carry out his purpose when the lock turned, the door opened, and in the light afforded by a lantern in his hand they saw a man standing in the doorway.

He was wrapped in a heavy coat encrusted with snow—and so far resembled the pictures of Santa Claus. He wore a beard, too—but it was black. There was no pack upon his shoulders, no smile on his face. In one hand was a lantern, in the other a pistol. He was frowning, too, and did not look at all jolly.

Johnnie's heart sank. In fact, he began to doubt whether it was Santa Claus.

The man stood still for one moment, and then whistled as before.

Witch Winnie answered by a low, joyful neigh.

"Ah, there she is," muttered the man under his breath.

Johnnie could stand it no longer.

"Halloa, Santy Claus!" he cried in nervous tones.

The man gave a start, and then, raising his pistol at full cock, threw the glare of the lantern full upon Witch Winnie and the two little ones.

It was a pretty picture. The mare standing with her superb head turned eagerly towards the new-comer, Minnie clasping her on one side, and Johnnie on the other, both of them looking fearlessly at the man with the cocked pistol.

"Aren't you Santa Claus?" cried Minnie.

The stranger lowered his pistol, and advanced.

"Yes, my little ones," he said, "I am Santa Claus."

"I knew it!" cried Johnnie. "Even Witch Winnie knows it. See how glad she is to see you! Why, she looks at you just the same as she looks at papa. Oh, I'm awful glad to see you, Santy. But where is your pack?"

"It's outside. Do you little ones expect any presents?"

"Of course we do," answered Minnie. "This little boy is Johnnie, and I am Minnie. Papa told us you were coming to-night, so we stole over to see you come in."

"Well, little ones," said Santa Claus in a rather stern voice, "it's against my rules to allow any one

to see me at work. Now, if you want to get a lot of the very nicest Christmas presents, you must make me a promise."

"All right, Santy Claus," cried Johnnie.

"You must go right back to the house, and go to sleep, and not say another word till sunrise to-morrow. Now, do you promise?"

"Cross my heart," cried the boy.

"And so shall I promise," added Minnie, "but first, dear Santa Claus, I want you to do me a favor. Papa told us that you came in place of the Infant Jesus. Is that so?"

"Y-yes," said Santa Claus, coughing uneasily, and putting away his pistol as though he were ashamed of it.

"Well, we know how much you must love the little Infant, and I thought that you would like to take a look at the crib which papa fixed up for us. There are twenty candles, and the little Infant is just lovely. Come on, Santa Claus, here's my hand."

Santa Claus shivered as the child put her confiding hand in his. He was in a great hurry; but a little child led him, led him to the other side of the stable into a vacant stall.

Striking a match, Minnie lighted a number of colored candles, revealing a beautiful wax figure of the Child Jesus lying with folded arms upon a

small square platform hardly more than an inch in thickness.

"Auntie Jane was over in Paris," explained Minnie, "and she bought this for us. Isn't it sweet?"

"It is," said the man, upon whose brow a faint moisture had broken out.

"Now, Santa Claus, I know you want to kneel down and pray. Johnnie and I always do."

Santa Claus knelt. He bowed his head, and did not see what Minnie was doing. Suddenly he gave a start, and looking up saw Minnie sinking to her knees, while from the little platform which supported the figure came a sweet, tinkling Christmas melody. It was Adams' *Noel*, and he shivered again, and the moisture upon his forehead gathered into beads as he listened to the sweetly sad strains.

"Look," whispered Minnie.

Suddenly the waxen infant opened its sweet blue eyes, while the tiny, sweet, waxen arms uncrossed themselves and were extended as though they would enfold the whole world in their warm, loving embrace.

"Isn't it beautiful?" whispered Johnnie in a tone that was a prayer.

Then the arms slowly folded again, and the sweet blue eyes were again curtained by the lovely

lids. Jesus was asleep. After a moment's pause the tinkle of the *Adeste Fideles* made the silence lovely.

"Let us sing for Santa Claus," whispered Johnnie.

At the word both broke out into the glad notes of the Christmas hymn, and sang with the sweetness of fresh and touching voices, and in the grand manner of a living faith.

Before they had ended Santa Claus threw his pistol before the shrine as an offering: he was done with it.

"Would you like to kiss the Infant?" asked Minnie.

"I dare not," he answered hoarsely.

There was a faint sound in the distance as of a horse galloping at full speed.

"God bless you—you—you—darlings; God bless you, and forgive me."

With the last words he was rushing for the door, where he disappeared as though he had not been, while nearer, louder, clearer came the tramping of the horse.

The children hurried to the door, and looked in vain for a sight of Santa Claus. Even as they were straining their eyes into the darkness there dashed up a horseman upon a foaming charger.

"Why, it's papa!" cried Minnie.

"Merry Christmas, papa, and we've seen Santa Claus, and he ran away when he heard you coming."

"Is Witch Winnie all right?" cried Mr. Graham, jumping from his horse.

"Sure!" answered Johnnie, and, supplemented by Minnie, he proceeded to tell of their night's adventures. Mr. Graham listened with his features under a forced restraint.

"It's too bad, papa, that you frightened Santy away; he didn't bring one Christmas present yet," said Minnie when Johnnie had concluded his account.

"Yes, he did; come up, my little ones, and see."

And they went up and saw. It was the finest Christmas tree in Kansas, and every gift that Minnie and Johnnie could desire was there.

"Now, my little darlings, let us go down to the crib, and thank the little Infant."

And they went down, and kneeling thanked the little Infant—Minnie and Johnnie for their beautiful Christmas gifts, and their father for the safety of Witch Winnie from the clutches of her former groom, who had forged two telegrams, who had entered the stable as a horse-thief, had remained in it as Santa Claus, and left it touched and softened and repentant through the sweet visions of innocence and love which the Infant Jesus had there vouchsafed him.

ONE STEP AND THEN ANOTHER;

OR,

THE RISE OF JIMMIE GLEASON.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH JIMMIE IS CONQUERED AND CONQUERS.

FOUNTAIN SQUARE is the heart of Cincinnati. Nearly all cars, electric and cable, make this square their rendezvous, and, in consequence, the people who grace this busy and bright spot with their presence are beyond the count of ordinary men. Also, it is a good place for the selling of newspapers. Lucky the boy who is allowed the privilege of owning a corner within sight of the beautiful fountain.

Such a lucky boy was Jimmie Gleason, aged thirteen, freckled of face, of a sandy head of hair, and an inquiring nose. He had a mouth just large enough to give one the impression he was good-hearted; and when he smiled the smile penetrated every feature.

Through many trials and tribulations had Jimmie entered into the possession of a corner which was actually within a stone's throw of the fountain. Jimmie, it is true, had never launched a stone at that famous bit of art. But then, you see, it had never occurred to his otherwise active mind so to do; and, truth compels me to add, there were certain periods in the life of Jimmie when that reckless young gentleman would have stopped at nothing. The corner which he held in undisputed possession was at Fifth and Walnut. "Healey's," whither ever so many Cincinnatians, and their near neighbors from over the river, resort for their favorite magazines, was his boundary line southward, and the middle of the square was the end of his beat in the opposite direction.

I said a moment ago that into the possession of this corner Jimmie had entered not without trial and tribulation. He had succeeded to it legitimately. "Mugsy" Mallon had bequeathed it to him on his retirement from the newspaper business, to assist with his talent the American Messenger Service. The transfer took place on the first of September, at eight o'clock in the morning.

By nine o'clock Jimmie had sold only three papers. He had not been idle, however. One black eye, a cut lip, and a lump on the forehead showed

that, as a matter of fact, he had been quite busy. He had enjoyed himself, too; for had he not drunk delight of battle? But at nine o'clock, as it happened, it was the other fellow who had the fun. The "other fellow" was slightly the senior of Jimmie. His life had been a rough one. When he was not, to borrow his own phrasing, "punching somebody's head," he was seriously meditating some such step. On seeing the new face at the coveted corner his heart was filled with joy. Here he could kill two birds with one stone; here business jumped with his personal inclinations. The policeman had scarce fully turned his back when the new face became a much battered one. Jimmie had the good sense to retire. Also, he meditated much.

A week elapsed before Jimmie, with his full smile and his merry eyes, added his quota of happiness to the merry-go-round of Fountain Square. He appeared without any papers under his arm, which was unprofessional.

"Come for another licking?" asked Scrappy Jones, his victor.

"Licking—nothing!" answered Jimmie cheerfully, but with no particular signs of meekness in his voice.

"Well, get away swift, or you'll wonder what happened to you."

"I was just a-goin' to ask you to get away your-

self, Scrappy. 'These here is my grounds, and I'm a-goin' to have 'em.'

Scrappy answered by a gesture, and the rest of the conference was conducted without the use of articulate language. Scrappy's gesture was a violent one. He made it with the right hand. It should have reached its full power when it came in contact with Jimmie's nose. But, as it happened, Jimmie gesticulated, too. It was the gesture of despair—the gesture which the heart-broken lover makes in the play, when he places his forearm before his eyes and abandons himself to the throes of grief. It is also the gesture which the boxer makes as a preventive of grief.

In less time than it takes to write it Scrappy had discovered that the Jimmie of to-day was not the Jimmie of yesterday and the day before; and Jimmie himself had discovered one of Scrappy's eyes, and also the tenderest part of that pugnacious young gentleman's nose.

The last discovery put a stop to further hostilities. Some of the bystanders, moved by the sight of blood, interfered; a friend of Scrappy led him away.

"You'se can keep the corner, Jimmie," he remarked as he turned the corner, "and you'se deserve it."

It was a magnanimous speech; and it so im-

pressed the onlookers of the newsboy fraternity who happened to be on the scene that young Master Gleason was left unmolested for a period of three days.

The secret of Jimmie's success is easily explained. After his eviction, you will remember, he meditated. The result of these meditations was that on the following day he presented himself to John Larkin, a young man of twenty-one years, who was accounted the best athlete of the parish.

At the moment of the meeting Larkin was seated on the stoop of his dwelling reading the baseball news in the *Post*.

"John, won't you give me some boxing lessons?"

"Eh?" said John, putting down the paper and looking in surprise at the small boy.

"I want a sort of a course."

"Oh, you do! and may I ask what for?"

"I want to lick a feller, and I can't do it unless I learn something."

"Indeed! And so you think I'm going to train you for such a purpose as that! Clear out, young man; there are too many fighters in this neighborhood already."

But Jimmie did not "clear out." He stood quite still, and gazed wistfully into Larkin's face.

"What do you want to lick a fellow for?" con-

tinued Larkin, softening perceptibly under the look.

"It's this way, John: Mugsy Mallon gave me his corner on Fountain Square when he went for a messenger boy, and I had it for just about one hour. The fellers worried me all the time, but I got ahead of them till Scrappy Jones came along, and then I had to go. Now, that corner is mine, and I'm going to have it back."

John Larkin noticed with interest the expression of determination on Gleason's face. He had seen the boy many a time before, but he had paid no particular attention to him. Although he was not aware of it, Larkin was a shrewd reader of character. The boy before him, he began to suspect, was worth more than a passing notice. Larkin reflected.

"Look here," he said slowly; "if I thought that my teaching you to box would only help to make a bully of you, I'd see you hanged before I'd give you a single hint."

"I'm not a bully," protested Jimmie.

Larkin surveyed the lithe, muscular, compact figure. Then he spoke:

"Even so; but suppose you came to be an expert boxer, you might be tempted to show off."

"That's so, I might," admitted Jimmie, reluctantly.

This admission produced more of an effect on Larkin than anything Gleason had thus far said.

"Well, that's spoken honestly. A boy who talks that way may be believed when he makes a promise. Now, young harum-scarum, I'm going to teach you all the boxing I know, and in return you are going to promise me never to fight except in self-defence."

"I swear that—" Jimmie had raised his right hand melodramatically, after the manner of his favorite stage heroes.

"Hold on," interrupted Larkin, "I don't want you to swear; your promise will be enough. What's that sticking out of your pocket?"

Before the boy could answer Larkin reached out a quick and dexterous hand, which returned with a package of cigarettes.

"Oh! You're beginning early."

"All the fellers do it."

"Oh, yes; certainly. But if you want to be a real man, and not an imitation of one, you'll have to find out that it is precisely in not doing what all the fellows do that is going to make you one. If you want to be strong and healthy and energetic let the cigarettes go. Suppose, Jimmie, you throw in a promise to that effect, too?"

"What! to stop smoking cigarettes for life?"

"No; till you're eighteen. When you are that

age you'll have sense enough to know what's good for you."

Jimmie gave the promises, and in return received six boxing lessons of an hour each. Larkin, even to this day, has not come upon a more promising scholar. Jimmie was a better boxer when the course finished. Incidentally, too, he received some lessons in manliness and honor which were a thousand times more valuable. Larkin was more than an athlete; he was a young man of high principle.

When Jimmie left him to resume his business on Fountain Square it was with the resolve that he would try to live in such a way as to be no discredit to his kind professor.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH JIMMIE MEETS FATHER NELSON, AND GETS A NEW IDEA.

"*Post! Times-Star!* Here you are. Sevingth edishing!"

Jimmie, who had been vociferating these remarks at a gentleman, suddenly checked himself on discovering that the object of his attentions was a Catholic priest.

"Good evnin', Fadder," he added in a far milder tone of voice, and giving the peak of his cap a jerk.

The priest, in return to his salutation, lifted his hat and smiled kindly.

"Got the baseball supplement?" he asked.

"No, Fadder; the extry won't be out till half past five; but the score at the end of the eight' innin' is seven to five in favor of the Cincinnatis."

"Thank you, my boy."

"If you jest wait a minute, Fadder, I'll run up and get the nint' innin' for you."

"No, thank you; you'd lose your trade. Here, give me a *Post*, my lad."

In return for the paper the priest handed the boy five cents, adding: "Never mind the change."

Then and there came a sort of revolution in the ideals of Master James Gleason. Thus far in his brief existence the motorman had been the grandest person in the world. Now the motorman had to make room on his lofty pedestal for the priest. To think that a man who could talk Latin if he felt like it should take off his hat to a bare-legged newsboy, inquire about the baseball score, and bestow so large a gift with so genial a smile! Jimmie, who, I am sorry to say, was a Catholic in theory rather than in practice, felt for the first time in his life that it was a good thing to be a

Catholic. A Church that could produce a man like that was worth while.

For the next quarter of an hour young Gleason went about his work of selling papers mechanically. He was thinking of the priest.

"Well, Jimmie, what luck?" cried some one, as he clapped him on the back.

Jimmie gave a start, and turning recognized John Larkin.

"Halloa, John; luck! that ain't no name for it, There was a reverend came along—"

"A *what?*"

"A reverend, you know."

"No, I don't know. If you mean a priest, say so. Don't talk as if you belonged to the Salvation Army."

"Nearly all the fellers call them reverend," objected James.

"The fellows you run with, yes. But no Catholic boys with any sort of a Catholic training. But excuse the interruption; what about the Father you met?"

"Well, do you know, he wanted the baseball supplement. Think of a reverend—I mean of a Fadder—likin' the national game."

"Didn't it occur to you, youngster, that perhaps he might have been a player himself once upon a time?"

"Do reverends—that is, do priests play ball?"

"Not as a profession, my son; but if you ever get a chance, you run up some afternoon to the seminary on Price Hill and watch the seminarians play ball. Some of them who will be priests in a year or two could give pointers to a great many professionals. But is that all?"

"No— Paper, sir?—*Post*, *Times-Star*—all about the horrible murder in Buckstown—sevingth edishing!"

Jimmie sold a paper and resumed.

"I was going to say he bought a paper and paid me five cents, and, John, when I put me fist to me cap he raised his hat as if his hand was a derrick, jest the same as the swell fellers raise their hats to the lady folks."

"Next time you meet him, young man, see if you can't raise your hat to him just as nicely as he did to you."

"Yes, sir; I'll raise mine a foot higher. That's the way to learn, ain't it, John? When you see a feller do a thing better than yourself try to catch up with him. Eh?"

For answer Larkin took young Gleason's hand and shook it with no little solemnity.

"Upon my word, Jimmie, I believe that you are going to get on. The fellows who go about with their eyes open, and manage to learn from every-

body, are the ones who promise to rise. Keep on that way. Learn from every one; it's the next best thing to a college education."

"You've learnt me a lot," said Jimmie. "I wish," he added reflectively, "that I knew the name of that priest. I don't know no priests."

"What was he like?"

"He was a short guy—"

"What's that?" cried Larkin in a warning voice.

"He was a man not as tall as you, John; but he had very broad shoulders and a big chest, and his hair was as black as the ace of spades, only a lot curlier, and he had a nose which wasn't very large nor yet very small, and that didn't turn down, but rather a little up, which made him look as if he wasn't afraid of anything."

John Larkin laughed.

"Well, Jim," he began when he had recovered himself, "you're in luck, sure enough. That's Father Nelson. He's one of the best friends the working boys have in this city. He runs a Sodality and a club for them, and I'll bet he has his eye on you. Have you ever been to confession?"

"No; but I think it's about time for me to go. They didn't teach us nuthin' about confession at the public, and ma is too tired at night after workin' all day, and I don't know how it's done."

"Well, you'd better get ready, my boy. Next

thing you know Father Nelson will be after you, and he'll not let you go."

"Say, John, couldn't you give me a few tips?"

John hesitated.

"It's a ticklish business," he remarked, half to himself. "Well, I don't mind if I do."

So the professor of boxing became teacher of Christian doctrine. James called every night, and when his interest in the Catechism flagged the gloves were brought out. John rejoiced in the new-born Christianity of his pupil, and was proud of his boxing.

CHAPTER III.

THE GLEASONS AT HOME.

ANY one who has visited Cincinnati may know that there is a number of tenement houses somewhat east of Fountain Square. In one of these, a box-like building, between Walnut Street and Broadway, resided the family of the Gleasons.

The family occupied three small rooms, comprising a kitchen (which by night was Mrs. Gleason's sleeping room) and two bedrooms. Of these, the first was occupied by the daughters, Mary, Ellen, and Margaret; the second by Jimmie, Eddie, his younger brother, and a cousin, Charlie Earle.

Mrs. Gleason, a widow for more than six years, worked out; Mary, a girl of nineteen, stayed home as housekeeper; Ellen, the oldest sister, had a position in a shoe factory.

She spent most of her free time in the reading of love stories, went to a ball nearly every Saturday night, and rose too late on Sunday to go to Mass.

Margaret, the youngest of the girls, had received a fairly good training at the parochial school. She, too, had worked for a time in a shoe factory, but before the opening of this story had, through an injustice, lost her position.

She went to confession every Saturday, a fact which afforded no little amusement to her older sisters.

If poor Margaret frowned or showed the least sign of impatience, Ellen, the factory girl, would say:

"Catch on to the saint. If I went to confession once a week, I'd like to see myself a losin' my temper."

Then Margaret would blush to the accompaniment of a general laugh.

Or, again, if Margaret ventured upon a remonstrance against the light, irreverent manner in which her sisters sometimes touched upon sacred things she was at once silenced.

"Pious is as pious does," Mary, the housekeeper, would observe. "When you're helping to support the family, Margaret, you may lay down the law to us."

"Yes," the young lady from the factory would add, "and it's all very well goin' to confession every week and hangin' 'round the church, but I should like to know how much money that sort of work brings in?"

Such sallies as these appealed powerfully to Charlie Earle's sense of humor. He had a coarse laugh. Ellen and Mary in the light of this laugh considered themselves quite witty.

James and Eddie generally sided with Margaret.

"You let Margaret alone," James would say. "I wish I was as good as her."

"Me, too," assented Eddie.

Mrs. Gleason took no part in these conversations, which were generally held at the frugal supper board. She rarely returned from her work till after nine o'clock at night, and then she was utterly worn out.

It was Margaret's custom to wait for the poor, jaded woman.

The Gleasons were in the habit of foregathering in the kitchen till about half-past eight. Then, in a body, they sought their respective bedrooms.

Since Jimmie's interview with John Larkin a

change had come about in this order. Our little newsboy, on returning from his Catechism lesson, which he kept secret from the whole family, would, under one pretext or another, retire early.

Gradually the curiosity of Charlie Earle was aroused.

"Say," he remarked one night, "I wonder what's Jimmie's little game?"

"He must be tired out from selling papers," suggested Ellen.

"Don't you believe it. I think I'll go and look. Come on, let's all take a squint. You carry the lamp, Mary."

Headed by Master Earle, the party proceeded on tiptoe to the door of the boy's room. Earle softly threw open the door.

The sight should have been an impressive one. As a matter of fact, it was not.

Jimmie was kneeling beside the bed. In one hand he held a lighted candle-stump, in the other an old and tattered book of devotions, and his lips were moving in prayer.

He jumped to his feet, as a scornful laugh told him that he was discovered. The blood rushed to his face, and he was ashamed.

"Oh, aren't we getting pious," cried out Earle.

"You're not in it with Jimmie, Margaret." laughed Mary.

Even Eddie tittered.

Shame was fast giving way to anger. Jimmie's case is not the only one on record of a man's losing his temper when disturbed at his devotions.

"Well, what do you people want, anyhow?" he said angrily.

"What's that you've got?" asked Earle, reaching out for the prayer book.

"Don't you get so gay, Charlie Earle," cried Jimmie angrily.

"Pious people should keep their tempers," observed Charlie mockingly.

Jimmie, meanwhile, had extinguished the candle, rendered unnecessary by the light of the lamp which Mary was holding aloft, and returned it to his pocket.

"I don't see why you should be ashamed to pray," said Ellen.

"Well, I shan't be ashamed any more," said Jimmie hotly, "and I'll see to it, too, that Eddie says his night prayers after this."

"Good for you, James," said Margaret.

"Oh! so you're going to run things in this room, are you?" Earle observed.

"Never you mind."

"But I bet I will. You're not Eddie's boss. And I'd like to know where I come in? We're not going to have no Sunday-school here."

When James called Eddie into their room on the following night, it was evident to the others that he was going to carry out his intentions. Hardly had the two begun their prayers when Earle came in and began to sing at the top of his voice,

"Glory, glory, Halleluia,
Glory, glory, Halleluia,
Glory, glory, Halleluia,
As we go marching on."

At the same time he marched with a very heavy step in time with his own music.

"I say," cried Jimmie, jumping up, "you get out of here, and mind your own business."

Earle gasped. This sounded, indeed, like a declaration of independence. Earle, as far back as his memory went, had been tacitly accepted as leader. The time had at length come when he must assert himself or lose his control.

"That's mighty cool," he said; "but suppose you get out yourself, you impudent little guttersnipe. I've a mind to thrash you. In fact, that's just what I will do, if you don't make yourself scarce."

"Keep away; don't touch me," Jimmie exclaimed. "I tell you I won't take any of your fooling."

To these words Earle paid no heed. He advanced and tried to catch Jim by the ear.

When the girls, disturbed by the noise, rushed

into the room a moment later, they saw a very angry small boy, before whose active fists and blazing eyes Earle retreated with more haste than dignity.

The quarrel stopped with their entrance. Earle consented to retire, which he did with much astonishment and some bruises upon his yellow face.

"If you interrupt again you'll get worse," bawled Jimmie. "Now, Eddie," he added, "suppose we finish our prayers."

Piety had made a bloody entrance into the Gleason family.

One week later Mrs. Gleason happened to come home earlier than usual. Earle and Mary and Ellen had gone out, and Margaret was awaiting her at the door.

"Why, my dear," Mrs. Gleason exclaimed, "what makes you look so joyful?"

"A lot of things, mamma. But first of all come quietly with me; I want you to listen to James and Eddie. You'll be glad when you hear them, mamma."

Not a little mystified, Mrs. Gleason accompanied her daughter to the boys' room.

Lightly Margaret threw open the door.

Together, in low, clear tones, the brothers were reciting the acts of Faith, Hope, and Love.

At the end of these prayers they added:

"Lord have mercy on papa, and God bless mamma."

The two boys were startled by a sob. They jumped to their feet and gazed upon their mother. Her eyes were wet.

"I've been a bad mother to you, my boys," she said with difficulty. "And you are such good boys, too. It is I that should have taught you to pray."

"And you would, too, mamma, if you had time," said James cheerfully.

"And she's going to have time from this out, James," cried Margaret, whose face was bright with joy. "Mamma, I've great news. Do you know what I've been doing these last two months?"

"I know you were up to something good," said James, confidently. "Go on and tell us."

"I've been working away learning typewriting and stenography; and I've learnt it, and my teacher says I'm first-class."

"Margaret," said James, "you're all right, and you've got more smartness in your little finger than all the rest of us put together."

"But that's not the best of it. The best is to come. There's a girl friend of mine who's going away to-morrow to be a nun. She was a stenographer, and I'm to get her place to-morrow at ten dollars a week."

For a moment the listeners were struck dumb. Eddie was the first to recover himself.

"I say, Margaret, I'll get those skates at Christmas, won't I?"

"Indeed you shall, Eddie. And now, mamma, you'll promise me, won't you, please, to take a rest? We want you at home, mamma. We all need you. And then you have been working so hard, and you look so tired and worn. Please, mamma, promise me you'll stop work."

"My dear, dear Margaret, it makes me ashamed to think how ungrateful I have been to God who has given me such good children. My dear, I ought to be at home to take care of my little ones, and I'm going to begin right now."

She kissed the three children affectionately.

"Now, my dears, I am a little tired, and—and—I think I'd like to say a few prayers myself."

"I'm going to confession next Saturday, mamma," said James.

"Well, dear, we shall go together."

When Earle and the two sisters returned that night and heard all that had taken place, they made a few timid remarks, and then fell into a respectful silence. Within the space of one hour piety had risen to a premium in the apartments of the Gleasons.

CHAPTER IV.

*IN WHICH JIMMIE GLEASON REPORTS PROGRESS TO
JOHN LARKIN.*

"WELL, how are you getting on these days?" Thus did John Larkin greet James Gleason one evening late in October. Jimmie, who happened to be passing Larkin's doorstep, seated himself beside his friend.

"Fine; everything is coming our way. I've joined Father Nelson's Sodality, and I belong to his club, and I go to his night-school, and the teacher says I'm learnin' most astonishin' fast."

"Keep it up, James. I'm rather glad now I gave you those boxing lessons."

"Yes, sir; so am I," answered James, with much emphasis on the "sir;" "those boxing lessons prepared me for confession."

"I hear from some of the boys that you're the best boxer of your size in Father Nelson's club."

"That's what they say, John; but the other fellows didn't have as good a professor as I had."

"How much do you want for that?" asked John, putting his thumb and forefinger into his vest pocket.

"I thrun that bouquet for nothing, John. I say,

do you remember you telling me to try and say my prayers every night?"

"Do I? Don't I remember that you had to thrash your cousin? It was the most pious fight I ever heard of. Do you keep it up?"

"Better than that, John. Now mamma has taken charge. We all say prayers every night together, and even Charlie Earle joins in occasionally. Since he saw me boxing one night at the club he's got to respect me a lot; and now I can turn him around my little finger."

"The trouble with Charlie is, he's a goose," said Larkin. "If you could manage to get him away from the hard crowd he runs with he might be quite a different sort of a fellow. Can't you get him into your club?"

"I think so; but first I'm going to make him go to confession. That may mean another fight, but—"

"Oh, I say," interrupted John, "you seem to think that the only way to get on is by the use of your fists. I don't want to hear of any more fighting, young man. If you are kind and patient Charlie will come 'round. Don't try to rush things."

"Just as you say, John. The rest of the people at home have gone to confession. Margaret's the girl that done it. And Ellen has given up the

Saturday night swarrys, and she gives nearly all her money to mother; and there's less expense, and our meals are better, and we've had no fusses nor fights since—since—”

“Since when?” asked John, seeing that Jimmie hesitated.

“By Jupiter! I didn't think of it before; but all the fussing and unpleasantness has stopped since Margaret bought a picture of the Sacred Heart and hung it up in the kitchen, and kept a little lamp burning before it.”

“Jimmie, my boy, Margaret is a jewel.”

“You can just bet your bottom dollar on that. She always was a nice sort of a girl, John; but she just simply beat herself when she started to going to confession every week, and now there ain't any of them in her class.”

“I reckon,” John observed in a voice of meditation, “that you and I have been thinking that those boxing lessons fetched you around. Now, I'll tell you what, youngster, I'm beginning to think that that sister of yours was praying hard all the time for you, and while we're taking all the credit, she's the one that's getting it.”

“Maybe you're right. At the place she's working she's got full right of way. The boss, some one told me, says she's just a natural-born stenographer. She can do double work, and, as like as

not, she'll get fifteen a week after Christmas, and that's higher than they've ever paid any stenographer in their concern."

"Now, suppose we get back to yourself. How's the newspaper business?"

"It's pretty slow. I feel mighty glad when I clear four dollars in a week. The other day, though, I made ninety cents."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; but that was pure luck. The papers were going fast enough because a guy out on Walnut Hills committed suicide and wrote a letter that was as good as a love story. Fact is, it was a love story and even women was a buying the evening edition. But my luck came in this way. An Avondale swell came along—Paul Ring, you know—and he was in such a hurry to get a car that he was almost fallin' over himself. He wanted a paper, and I gave him a *Post*. Then he thrun me a dime, and bawled at me to hurry up with the change. Well, you know what I did then?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, I couldn't find the change. Of course I looked into the wrong pockets, and kept on fiddling—the regular way, you know."

"No, I don't," contradicted John.

" 'Well,' he growled, 'give me the change some other time,' and hopped on to the car. You see, John, that was nine cents to the good."

"I should say it was nine cents to the bad."

"Why, all the fellers do it; and if I was to give him back his nine cents they'd laugh me off the square."

"See here, James, did Mr. Ring give you that money to keep?"

"N-no."

"Whose money was it?"

"His."

"Whose is it, since he has given it to no one?"

"His."

"Therefore, that money is no more yours than if you had stolen it. What did Father Nelson say when you told him about it in confession?"

"Why, I never thought about telling him that!"

"Well, I'd advise you to tell it. Why, James, I thought you were honest."

"So did I till just now," answered James shamefacedly. "But, confound it all, I don't see why I can't hold on to money when all the other fellers—"

"I know what you're going to say. You're bringing up the old argument that is used to excuse nearly all the smallness and dishonesty in the world. I thought better of you, James. I thought you intended to do right because it is right; and to avoid wrong because it is wrong."

"Halloa, here comes Margaret," cried James, glad of a diversion.

Neatly, modestly attired, with the heart of the rose in her cheeks, and eyes bright with health and intelligence, Margaret, who had been making a visit to St. Xavier's Church, came down the street. She caught Jimmie's voice, and turned her face with a smile towards her brother.

John Larkin had arisen from his seat on the doorsteps, and, though the October dusk concealed the fact somewhat, was blushing violently.

"Say, Margaret, I want you to know John Larkin. He's the best friend I have, and he's the one that taught me boxing."

Margaret offered her hand with frankness and cordiality.

"I am very happy to meet you," said John in an uncertain voice.

"And I can say the same, Mr. Larkin. It is like meeting an old friend to meet you. Jimmie has made your name a household word. We all know how much you have done for him, and every one of us at home says 'God bless you' every night of our lives."

In return to which John started fifteen different sentences, no one of which has been finished to this day.

There was little more said on either side.

When James and Margaret had departed John went within and summoned his sister.

"I say, Liz, if you're not too busy, come down a minute."

Elizabeth was never too busy when John called.

"Please, Liz, sing me a song," he continued when his sister had followed him into the parlor.

"What shall I sing, John?"

"That one about the one girl."

" 'There's only one girl in the world for me?' "

"That's it."

Lizzie seated herself at the piano (it was a present to her from John) and sang it, wondering.

"I say, Liz, that's the best song I ever heard."

Lizzie made a grimace; it was not the style of music she affected. But then she did not understand.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH JIMMIE MAKES RESTITUTION AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

WHEN James Gleason remarked in the course of his confession that he had cheated a man out of nine cents, Father Nelson merely observed, "Give it back to him," and thought no more of it.

Not so with our little newsboy. He yearned

for the day to come when he could assure John Larkin that full restitution had been made. So every afternoon, as he stood at his place on Fountain Square, he was on the lookout for Mr. Ring. But his wealthy patron seemed to have unaccountably disappeared.

Two weeks passed. Then James determined to seek Mr. Ring in his den. Mr. Ring was well known down-town, and there was little trouble in getting his address.

One Sunday afternoon, accordingly, Master Gleason, dressed in his best clothes and rejoicing in a tasty necktie which Margaret had thoughtfully provided for him, took an Avondale car. He got out at Oak Street, and walking little more than a square found himself before a fine residence. A boy of about his own age, though, unlike Jimmie, very thin and pale, was seated upon the veranda. Between him and James sloped a grassy lawn.

"Halloa!" said the boy, as he observed that Jimmie was gazing at the house in some perplexity.

"Halloa!" returned Jimmie. "Could you please tell me whether this is Mr. Paul Ring's house?"

"He's my pa," exclaimed the boy, rising and coming down the walk. "Won't you come in?"

As he spoke he threw open the iron gate and smiled very engagingly.

James liked him at once.

"I'm a newsboy," he said.

"Are you? When I was little I used to wish I could be one. My name is Cyril—Cyril Ring. What's yours?"

"Jimmie Gleason."

"I knew a boy named Gleason once. He used to go with me to St. Maure's College. His first name was Gerald; is he any relation of yours? Why don't you come on in?"

"I guess there's no need," said James, "and none of my people go to school." He fumbled in his pocket as he spoke, and brought out a nickel and four cent-pieces. "You see, three or four weeks ago, your father bought a paper of me, and gave me a dime and told me to give him the change some other time. He was in a hurry, you know. I've been looking for him for some time; but he hasn't shown up, and I began to get anxious. You see, I promised I'd return the money."

Jimmie held the nine cents toward Cyril, who, however, made no motion to take them.

"Come on in, James Gleason. Let's sit down on the porch, and talk it over. I want you to tell me about the way you sell papers. It must be great fun."

"All right; I'll come in, thank you. My! isn't this a nice place? I'd like to live in a place like

this, where you can see grass that's green, and trees with lots of leaves on them."

"Where do you live?"

"On Fifth, west of Broadway. It's a tenement, and it's pretty close," answered James, as he took the chair to which Cyril motioned him. "But, look here, please take this money and give it to your father."

"Let's talk about it," said Cyril. "You said you promised to give it back, didn't you?"

"Did I?"

James began to look confused.

"Yes, you did. Now who was it you promised?"

"I'd rather not tell, Cyril."

"O, very well," Cyril flushed a little. "I didn't intend to be curious, you know. I beg your pardon."

"Well, I will tell you; only keep it a secret. The priest told me to do it."

"O, you're a Catholic boy. I'm glad to know that. I'm one myself, and the fellows around here, though some of them are very nice, are none of them Catholics. But why didn't you give the money back to pa down-town?"

"I wanted to; I've been trying to catch him for about two weeks. But he didn't show up, and then I made up my mind to get it off my conscience, and so I came here."

"Pa was away for a week in Columbus on some business—he calls it a deal, whatever that means. Then when he got home he was laid up with a cold, and that's the reason you didn't see him."

"I hope he's all right now," said James.

"Yes; he's been sitting up the last three days, and to-morrow he intends to go down-town."

"Well, I'll not bother him. You give him the money, and that will be the end of it."

"What's the use? Nine cents is nothing to pa, and it may be a good deal to you."

"Yes; but you see the nine cents are his, and they aren't mine."

"Just wait one minute. Oh, I beg pardon—won't you come in? and I'll run up and see pa."

"There's no need of calling him," James made answer. "I can settle the thing with you, and—"

But Cyril had thrown open the front door and was skimming up the stairs.

He returned very shortly, followed by his father, who looked rather perplexed.

"Well, young man, what's your business?" he began, putting a hand on Gleason's shoulder, and looking him squarely in the eyes.

"I sold you a paper once, Mr. Ring," began Jimmie, dropping his hat in his confusion, and not daring to pick it up. "You give me ten cents, and didn't have no time to wait for the change."

Jimmie's grammar grew sensibly worse under the eyes of Mr. Ring. Cyril, who looked somewhat alarmed at his father's stern demeanor, picked up the fallen hat, and stood by an interested and pained spectator.

"Be seated," said Mr. Ring, releasing his grasp, and taking a chair himself.

Jimmie placed himself on the edge of the chair, blushing as though he had been detected in the act of robbing a hen-roost.

"What's your name, boy?"

"Jimmie Gleason?"

"How old are you?"

"I'm thirteen, sir; near fourteen."

"When do you expect to be fourteen?"

"Two days before Christmas, sir."

"Well, I suppose you can wait that long. You were a Christmas gift to your parents, weren't you?"

"I guess so, sir," Jimmie answered, trying to smile, and wondering whether the man before him with the set, stern gaze was serious or not.

"So you came to give me back those nine cents?"

"Yes, sir; that's it," said Jimmie eagerly. "Here they are."

Mr. Ring took the nine cents, counted them elaborately three times, critically examined one of

the coins, which had an ancient appearance, then put them into his vest pocket.

"What do you do for a living, young man?"

"Sell papers, sir."

"How much does that bring you?"

"From about three dollars and a quarter to four dollars a week."

"Do you like it?"

"I do it to help along, sir."

"Can't you do anything else besides selling papers?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Can you read?"

"As high as fifth reader."

"Can you write?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any accomplishments?"

Jimmie stared.

"Can you do anything else?"

"I—I can box, sir."

"O, I say; I've a pair of boxing gloves," began Cyril. But his father, by a warning glance, reduced him to silence.

"I suppose you can turn handsprings and walk on your hands and bend the crab?"

"Yes, sir. And I'm pretty good on the turning pole and the parallel bars. Since I joined Father

Nelson's club, I've been practicing regularly, and John Larkin has given me lessons."

"Say, pa, mayn't I take James up to see my gymnasium?"

"Now one more question, and I'll let you go. Who put you up to coming here with the money?"

For a moment there was an angry gleam in the eye of the poor newsboy. Mr. Ring noticed it.

"Well," he added quickly, "I see I made a mistake in asking that question. Good-by."

"Good-by, sir," answered Jimmie, coldly. He then turned to Cyril with a cordial smile. "Good-by, Cyril; I'm glad I met you."

Cyril shook the offered hand cordially, but said nothing. Then Jimmie, feeling a little sick at heart, turned his face from the splendid mansion. Such places and such people were not for him.

"By the way," called Mr. Ring, before the boy had reached the last of the flight of steps. "Did you come out in the car?"

"Yes, sir."

"Going back that way?"

"No, sir; I reckon I'll foot it home."

"Do you feel like walking?"

"I'd rather ride, sir; but——" Jimmie finished his sentence with a blush.

"You have a right, young man, to charge me

for carriage expenses. Here's ten cents to cover them."

"But you lose a cent, sir."

"Take it anyhow."

Reluctantly Jimmie received the money. He was afraid to refuse it. Then he went down the path and took a car, feeling sore and bruised.

As for Cyril, there were large tears in his eyes, but he said nothing, and tasted the bitterness of life in silence.

CHAPTER VI.

*IN WHICH JIMMIE GLEASON DISCOVERS THAT FIGHTING
ON THE STREET HAS ITS DISADVANTAGES.*

THE boys' Sodality were assembled in St. Xavier's Church for their regular Sunday meeting. Suspended by a ribbon round his neck, each boy wore a large medal of the Blessed Mother, and each boy's shining Sunday face showed that he gloried in the wearing thereof.

They were a brave set, for the most part—honest, eager, intelligent, a little robust in their Christianity, not extraordinarily stylish in their dress, but right, valiant, though sometimes erring, clients of the Blessed Mother of God. Of such are the hopes of a good parish.

They recited the Office in no uncertain tones. Barring a few variations from the conventional manner of pronunciation, the effect was imposing. Then, when their voices—one hundred and fifty strong—took up the joyful theme, “Hail, Mother of Our Maker, hail! Thou Virgin ever blest,” Father Langdon felt inspired. The singing was robustious. There were no *piano* passages in the performance: save when they made an uncertain start, the song was *fortissimo*.

Then Father Langdon made a mistake. He was an old missionary Father, whose fame has gone over the United States. His earnestness and unction seldom failed to move the hearts of his hearers. On this occasion he was thoroughly aroused by the edifying conduct of the little fellows before him. Father Nelson had requested him to conduct the exercises, and begged him to “stir the boys up.” And he certainly did stir them up.

He exhorted his brave little hearers to stand up for their faith, not to yield to human respect, to be strong, valiant soldiers of Christ. Then he poked fun at the weak-kneed Catholic boy, and, really inspired by the eager attention of all, he concluded by appealing to them to fight for their religion. Now, with his hearers there was only one possible meaning to the word fight.

When the boys issued from the church, most of

them were only too eager to stand up for their faith. A party of little Jews—harmless youngsters—happened to be passing tranquilly at the time. One of them was very much astonished by receiving a whack on the head. There was no more tranquillity in that party. A moment later they were rushing down the street for their lives, pursued by at least two dozen defenders of the faith. There were many other things that happened, which I omit. The policeman on the beat had a bad quarter of an hour, after which he went to Father Nelson and begged him as a personal favor to suppress the Sodality.

"Those fellows don't want no medals," he said pathetically; "what they want is a patrol wagon with a little clubbing now and then by way of variety."

Father Nelson explained the little mistake, and sent Officer Jenkins away perfectly satisfied, and the richer by half a dozen cigars.

Jimmie Gleason was delighted with the sermon. His great desire on leaving the church was to meet a real, genuine member of the A. P. A. disorganization—age and strength being no consideration.

He did not happen to meet a member of this particular society for the promotion of ignorance; but, as luck would have it, he came upon Scrappy Jones.

Then it struck his tender conscience all at once that Scrappy had, on a former occasion, called him "a Catholic cur." He remembered that he had resented the term "cur" according to his ability, but it came home to him now that he had taken no thought of the opprobrious use of "Catholic."

They were on the corner of Fifth and Sycamore.

A few words passed, and presently the two were locked together in combat. They had not fairly begun when a gentleman stepped between them, and with a single movement sent the two flying apart.

Jimmie was not a little disconcerted on discovering that the unlooked-for peacemaker was Mr. Ring.

"Ah, Mr. Gleason," he said mockingly, "sorry to disturb you in your Sunday festivities."

"He called me a Catholic cur, sir," panted James.

"Why, that was three months ago," answered Scrappy.

"Yes, but I didn't take no notice of it then," retorted James.

Mr. Ring smiled.

"Come with me, Gleason," he said.

They walked along for half the length of the square in silence.

"My little boy, Cyril," Mr. Ring at last began, "took a liking to you, and wanted me to ask you

to come and see him. I was going to do so; but, really, after the little scene in which you have just figured, I don't see my way to doing it. Fighting on the street gives one the idea that the fighters are toughs."

"Yes; and I broke my promise I made to John Larkin. I'm sorry, sir; I like Cyril; but I know I'm not fit company for him. Good-by, sir."

And Jimmie, covered with blushes, slunk away. He told his sad story to Margaret; but even she, with all her gentle sympathy, could not console him.

Scrappy had not so much as touched him; yet Jimmie felt that on this occasion he had met with the bitterest defeat of his life.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH JIMMIE UNDERTAKES TO CURE CYRIL'S FEVER.

FOR fully a fortnight James Gleason was deep in the slough of despond. He was very severe with himself, and spent much thought in considering how he might repair his evil manners.

One little drop of consolation found its way into the heart of these dark days: Mr. Ring bought an evening paper of him regularly, always with a kindly glance, occasionally with a few friendly

words. For some reason which he could not account for to himself, James set great store on the good opinion of Mr. Ring. Next to Father Nelson, whom James worshipped, he was our little newsboy's hero.

One afternoon Mr. Ring informed Jimmie that Cyril was quite sick.

"What's the matter with him, sir?"

"It's some sort of a fever, James. The doctor is afraid that it may develop into typhoid fever. Pray for him, won't you? He's naturally a very delicate boy."

"You bet I will, sir; and I'll tell Father Nelson, too."

So Cyril had a fever! James remembered the time—it must have been when he was a toddler of seven—when he tossed about restlessly on a burning couch, and when kindly neighbors entering, and feeling his brow, exclaimed: "Poor boy, what a fever he has!" And he remembered, too, how some of them, who could ill afford it, brought him in large, delicious oranges. Upon my word, I know of nothing in this world more touching and more beautiful than the kindness of the very poor to the very poor.

In Jimmie's mind there was a close connection between fever and oranges. He counted his little gains as he stood at his corner. There were

seventy-five cents on hand. Here James took a desperate resolution; he would spend sixty cents on oranges, carry them to the door of Mr. Ring's house, ring the bell, and run away. Afterwards he would explain the matter to his mother.

He entered a fruiterer's and asked to see the finest oranges they had. The clerk, wearing an expression of respectful astonishment, pointed out a pyramid of them which made Jimmie's mouth water.

"How much are they?"

"One dollar a dozen."

"Are they for you, Johnnie?" asked an elderly man who happened to be passing the two at the moment. Jimmie recognized the proprietor.

"No, sir; for a boy. He's sick, and he's a friend of mine."

"Give him a half dozen, Phil," said the man as he proceeded on his way to the office.

"Thank you, sir; but I'd rather pay."

"Very well; give him wholesale prices, Phil. I think he's a good fellow."

Jimmie got the oranges for thirty-five cents, and departed happy and blessing the proprietor. He could afford to take the cars now.

When Mr. Ring's housemaid answered a ring at the door, she found a package, to which was attached a slip of paper, with the words: "To Cyril

Ring, from a friend. Directions—Take one every time you feel dry. Never say die.”

“There’s only one person in the whole circle of my acquaintances who could have done that,” Mr. Ring observed to his wife, as the two sat beside the fever-stricken boy.

“And who is that?” she asked.

“Jimmie Gleason,” said a weak voice from the bedclothes.

“You have said it, Cyril. I really think I must invite him to come after all. God bless the little rowdy.”

“Do, papa, please!” cried the bright-eyed, flushed child, sitting up in his excitement.

“Yes; I’ll do it. There’s a lot of good in the world, that we can’t see on account of poor clothes and tenement quarters.”

On the following afternoon Jimmie Gleason at his station on Fountain Square, was somewhat astonished when a messenger boy came up to him and handed him a letter.

“No answer,” said the messenger boy, shortly and walked away.

Jimmie tore open the envelope, and read the following inclosure:

“MASTER JAMES GLEASON:

“My little boy, Cyril, wishes to see you. He has taken quite a liking to you; and, as he is sick, I let

him have his way. On receiving this, please call at my office; I want to have a talk with you.

"Yours truly,

"PAUL M. RING."

The light of joy shone in Jimmie's eyes, as he at once made for Mr. Ring's office.

"Ah, there you are," said Mr. Ring in a voice that was extremely cordial. He was seated at a desk examining a closely-written document of many pages. "I'm glad to see you, my boy."

As he held out his hand, which Jimmie clasped, he continued:

"By the way, what do you consider the best thing for fever?"

"Oranges, sir," answered Jimmie with conviction.

"Ah! That was very nice of you. Where did you buy them?"

"How did you find out, sir?" asked the boy, very much surprised.

"A little bird told me. But now suppose we get down to business. This is your time for selling papers, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir; I begin at two and keep on till half-past six."

"What are you making a week?"

"Between three and four dollars, sir."

"And what are you doing in the morning?"

"I do some reading and studying, sir. My sister Margaret tells me what to do. And I go over my work with her every night."

"Indeed! I'm pleased to hear that. Either you are a very good fellow, or your sister Margaret is a wonder."

"That's just what she is, sir. She's doing her best to make me respectable. I don't think there are many girls like her."

Mr. Ring looked pleased. He held that any boy gave promise who was devoted to his sister.

"What are you studying, Jimmie?"

"Arithmetic and book-keeping, sir. I don't know much about the book-keeping yet, but I'm pretty good at figuring."

"Can you write a fair hand?"

"I—I don't know, sir. If you wish, I'll show you."

"Very well; copy this letter for me."

Jimmie took the letter which Mr. Ring had picked from among a number on his desk, and, seating himself at a small table, proceeded to follow out his instructions. Mr. Ring, meanwhile, addressed himself to the formidable document which he had laid down on the boy's entrance.

"I'm done, sir," said Jimmie, presently.

"So soon?" Mr. Ring took up the freshly written page, and ran his eye over it.

"That's not half bad," he said presently. "It has the one great merit of being legible, which is really nine points of penmanship. Keep on, my boy. You are on the right track. Perhaps some day I may be able to do something for you."

"Thank you, sir," Jimmie made blushing reply. He was sensitive to praise, as are all high-spirited boys. "If you please, sir, I think I'll call on Cyril this afternoon."

"What about your papers?"

"I guess I can let 'em go for Cyril, sir."

"What made you take such a liking to Cyril, my boy?" Mr. Ring looked more pleasant than ever. Jimmie Gleason, if he only knew it, had touched the tenderest chord in the man's heart.

"Because—well, he's such a nice feller. He's not one bit stuck up, and he has such a kind face. I don't see how any one could help liking him."

Little did our newsboy realize just then all the consequences of his few words. Mr. Ring was charmed. For a moment there was a suspicious moisture in his eye.

"Look here, Gleason," he resumed after a minute's pause, during which he absently arranged the papers upon his desk. "Look here;" as he repeated the phrase, he wheeled round in his office chair and fixed his penetrating eyes full upon Gleason's face, "that boy of mine is innocent."

"Yes, sir," said Gleason vaguely.

"He knows little or nothing of the world's wickedness, and you do."

"I've been thrun in all kinds of company," answered Jimmie meekly, "and I reckon I've heard and seen a lot I didn't had ought to."

The critical Mr. Ring was too absorbed in the subject of discussion to observe the wonderful ending of Jimmie's sentence. He went on:

"Now, if I thought that you would teach him anything wrong, that you would be careless in your talk with him, I'd see you hanged before I'd let you become a friend of his. Of course, I don't think that you would purposely do anything of the sort; but it might happen very easily that without giving the matter thought, you would branch out into topics unsuited for the ears of Cyril."

"Since I joined the Sodality, sir," Gleason said, "I have tried to be careful in my talk. I was the same as the rest of the fellers up to that; but now I'm doing pretty well. And, sir, I'd rather cut my tongue out than say anything Cyril shouldn't hear."

"That is spoken like a man," cried Mr. Ring with genuine enthusiasm. "You're of the right sort, my boy. If you keep your Sodality resolution and speak always as though your sister were within earshot, you'll grow up to be a Christian gentle-

man—after all, there's nothing higher than that for you or for me."

"I intend to keep it, sir," said Gleason firmly. "Father Nelson gave me a pointer on that, the first time I went to him to confession. He said pretty much what you've just said."

"Very good; how many papers have you under your arm?"

"Fourteen, sir."

"Give me the lot. Here's fourteen cents for them, and ten cents for your carfare. I think you may go to Avondale at once."

"Thank you, sir," said Gleason, accepting the money. "But first I think I'll run home, and brush up a bit, and try to look my prettiest."

"Very good. Got over your fighting habit?"

"You made me awfully ashamed of myself, sir. I'm doing better now."

"Good-by, then. I'll see you soon again."

"Good-by, sir. And I'm very much obliged."

"By the way," cried Mr. Ring, as Jimmie reached the office door. "Call to see me this time to-morrow."

"All right, sir."

When James had departed Mr. Ring fell into a brown study. Five minutes or more passed; then he roused himself, wrote a memorandum which he placed on a file, and said:

"Yes, I'll do it."

CHAPTER VIII.

*IN WHICH JIMMIE GLEASON FORGETS HIMSELF, AND IS
PLUNGED FROM HAPPINESS TO DESPAIR.*

"I THINK I'm going to get better now," said Cyril as he caught Jimmie Gleason's hand, and held it for some moments.

He was lying on his bed, in his own little room, which was a marvel of neatness, and made fragrant by the breath of flowers placed on a table within reach of his wasted hand.

Jimmie Gleason took in many things at a glance. He had never seen a sick-room like this. How neat and pretty it all was! Flowers, and fragrance, and light and air. Jimmie almost wished that he were ill himself. He rejected the thought, and addressed himself to the invalid.

"I'm dead sorry to see you sick, Cyril; but I'm glad to see you. I had a long talk with your father. He was very nice to me. I like him; but I'm awfully afraid of him."

"Afraid of my father!" cried Cyril. "Why, he's just the nicest man in the world."

"He is nice," assented Jimmie, "but that's just the trouble. He's so far above me that I'm always

afraid of putting my foot in it. You see, I haven't any manners; I've been awfully careless, and when I get in his company, I'm always wondering whether I'm doing things right or not."

"But papa likes you all the same. He says you're honest, and that you are bound to make your mark if you remain so."

"Did he say that?" asked Jimmie, with brightening eyes.

"Yes; and he says that if you stick to your faith, you are sure to remain honest."

"Well, I hope I'll do that, anyhow. I'm pretty sure to stick to it, so long as I belong to the Sodality."

"I'm a member of the Sodality myself, Jimmie. When I was going to St. Maure's last year I was prefect of the junior division."

"Were you prefect?"

"Yes, though I don't know why. There were so many boys there who were so good. I knew some little boys amongst them who went to confession and communion twice a week."

"Gee! That was mighty often. I'd like to go every week myself, only I'd be a hypocrite if I did."

"How would you be a hypocrite?"

"Well, people would think I was awfully pious, and I'm not. I—I wish I were good enough to go often."

"O, for that matter," said Cyril, rising to a sitting position in his bed, "none of us are fit to go at all. We don't go because we are fit to go, but because Our Lord wants us to come to Him; and the oftener we go, provided we do it the right way, the better we shall become. That's what the Father I used to go to confession to told me."

"Father Nelson advised me to go oftener, too; but I thought he said so because he didn't know how bad I was. I think I'll see him about it again."

The two branched off into a rambling talk about school days, newspaper selling, athletics, and, of course, baseball. On this point, Jimmie Gleason was an oracle—and an eloquent oracle at that. He seemed to know the history of every prominent player in the league. Cyril, still very weak, lay back and listened to story after story of great plays upon the diamond. Gleason could not possibly have hit upon a topic more interesting to the little invalid. All the restraints born of the strange surroundings had passed away, and Gleason talked with a freedom and humor that sent the hours flying on golden wings.

Waxing more animated, he arose and by a vivid object lesson showed the various deliveries of the great pitchers; and the room grew gay with silvery laughter as Cyril watched the wondrous con-

tortions of body and hand which Jimmie presented to his alert gaze.

Finally, the narrator came to describe the sinuous delivery of the once famous Foutz. He doubled himself up; then, so to speak, shook himself out again, and threw back his arm with a wide and rapid swing. Alas! that swing embraced in its course a beautiful vase upon the mantel. Down it came with a crash, shattered into a hundred fragments.

What was that which rang out upon the sudden stillness which succeeded the fall?

Jimmie Gleason had forgotten himself, and an oath, brutal, coarse, disgusting, had slipped from his lips.

He could have bitten his tongue out an instant later. He gazed at the broken vase. There it lay shattered, like the dream that had just come into his own life. He had broken a vase—that was bad enough. He had broken his word—that was a thousand times worse. A filthy oath, reeking of the slums and of the gutter, had found its way into the sanctity of that beautiful room, and into the startled ears of the pure and innocent boy whose life, he knew, had been so sweet and untainted. The bitterness of death and parting had come upon the newsboy's soul, the bitterness of the spoken and irrevocable word that had thrown

aside for a moment a corner of the curtain which hid what was filthiest and vilest in his life.

Jimmie turned from the contemplation of the vase, and looked upon Cyril. Gentleman as he was, Cyril could not restrain the expression of pain and wonder which that oath had evoked.

Just for the fraction of a second did Jimmie gaze upon him, then, his face white as marble, with a sound that was at once a groan and a sob, he sprang from the room, and hurried down the stairs.

Gone gone forever, was all the new-born loveliness. In shattering that vase, he had shattered his career. The pale, frightened boy who left that house like a thief had reached a moment in his life when the present and the future were robed in the black horror of despair.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH MARGARET COMES TO THE HELP OF HER BROTHER AND MR. RING "DOES IT."

"A YOUNG lady to see you, sir," said a clerk to Mr. Ring at noontide of the following day.

Mr. Ring wheeled about in his chair and gazed in mild surprise at a timid girl.

"What can I do for you, Miss?" he said.

The girl was pale and trembling. She tried to speak, but no word came from her lips.

Mr. Ring feared that there was going to be a scene.

"Sit down, Miss—here, take this." He arose and brought a chair over beside his desk.

The girl seated herself, brushing away, as she did so, a tear.

"If you please, sir, I am Margaret Gleason, the sister of little Jimmie."

"Oh, indeed; I am glad to see you. I have heard of you, and I think when I did, your ears must have burned." Mr. Ring took Margaret's hand. He was very cordial and reassuring in his manner.

"I came to see you about Jimmie, sir. My poor brother has lost heart and does not dare to face you."

"Because of that broken vase? Why, I only happened to hear of it by the merest accident. Pooh! that's nothing. What's a vase more or less? In fact, there were too many at home. He needn't worry about that in the least. All of us break things now and then."

"But that is not what is bothering him so much, sir. Of course, he is grieved about that, too; he is ashamed of his awkwardness, and talks about his being a bull in a china shop."

"O, it's his sudden departure—his taking French leave, so to speak, that worries him. Well, it wasn't exactly good form, I admit. But he's only

a boy, and not accustomed to the unpleasant surprises of life. Tell him he needn't worry."

"But, sir, surely you know he didn't run away on account of the broken vase?"

"That is just what I thought, Margaret."

"Didn't you hear what he said, sir?"

"Why, no; what did he say?"

"Didn't Cyril tell you anything?"

"Beyond saying that Jimmie had gone off in a sort of panic after accidentally breaking a vase, I got nothing out of Cyril. It was like pulling teeth to get even that information. Of course, he told me what a fine time they were both having up to the vase incident—and on the first point he was sufficiently eloquent."

"Cyril was very kind, sir; but he didn't tell you the whole story. My poor brother was so shocked at the accident, that he forgot himself and said something which he thinks has disgraced him forever."

"Indeed! What did he say?"

"I didn't ask him, sir. I thought he had told me enough."

"I beg your pardon, Margaret. I should not have asked you that question, anyhow. And you were quite right in not probing any further. So Jimmie is badly cut up?"

"He's in a dreadful state of mind, sir. He says

he is not fit to come near your little boy. I never yet saw Jimmie so utterly wretched. He's afraid to come near you."

"Tell him I want to see him this afternoon."

"I'm afraid he won't come, sir."

"Make him come."

"I'll try. But please deal gently with him. If you only knew how hard my brother is trying to be good. Poor little fellow; he's had no chances. He's lived on the street, and mother has had no chance till lately to watch over him. We have all been struggling, and I often wonder how it is that Jimmie is so good. Since he joined the Sodality, he has changed so much, and he is the best of brothers. If you knew how hard he is trying, you would forgive him for that slip of yesterday. You have no idea, sir, how much he thinks of your good opinion."

"I promise you, Margaret, to be kind to him, if he comes. Can't you persuade him to see me?"

"Really, sir, I fear that he is too ashamed to face you."

"Jimmie is a boy of his word, isn't he?"

"O, yes, Mr. Ring. If he makes a promise, he keeps it."

"Very well. Now, yesterday he promised to call on me to-day."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and tell him that I hold him to his promise."

"Now I'm sure he will come, no matter what it costs him. Well, Mr. Ring"—here Margaret arose—"I want to thank you for your great kindness to my brother. His acquaintance with your little boy Cyril has done him so much good. Good-by, sir."

"Hold on one moment, Margaret. Where is Jimmie now?"

"He's home, sir, and moping—a thing I never knew him to do before."

"Perhaps I can save trouble by calling on him personally. Are you engaged for the next hour?"

"No, sir; I am free till one o'clock. I called in to see you on my way home to dinner."

"If you don't mind, then, I'll go along with you."

Margaret demurred faintly. She spoke of the poor quarters and surroundings, to which Mr. Ring answered by a smile, as he took up his hat and escorted his new acquaintance out of the office and into the street.

Very soon they reached the tenement. They found Mrs. Gleason, her daughter Mary, and Jimmie at table. They all arose in some confusion at the sight of their unlooked-for visitor; and Jimmie's face turned ashen gray. Conscience had made a coward of him.

"Mother, this is Mr. Ring," began Margaret.

"He has come here to see Jimmie, since Jimmie wouldn't come to him."

"You are very welcome, Mr. Ring," said Mrs. Gleason. "But I am sorry I didn't know you were coming. Things aren't in very good order," and she cast an anxious look about the kitchen.

It was poor in conveniences yet withal very neat and clean. The fare upon the table, though simple, was inviting.

"I am glad to meet Jimmie's mother," Mr. Ring made answer with a courtliness which set her at her ease. "And this, I take it, is Jimmie's sister. And how are you, Jimmie?"

Jimmie came forward and shook hands, but he dared not lift up his eyes.

"Are you sorry to see me, my boy?"

"I'm ashamed, sir."

Meantime Mrs. Gleason had brought in the "best chair" from the other room.

"No, thank you; I won't sit down. I see I am interrupting your meals. If you have no objections, I'll take Jimmie off with me."

"Indeed no, sir," answered Mrs. Gleason, looking, nevertheless, puzzled.

"The fact is," explained Mr. Ring, "I examined him yesterday, and found that he writes a very legible hand and spells quite well. I've got some copying I want done, and I think Jimmie will do it ad-

mirably. I intend putting him to work right **now**, at a salary of five dollars a week, and if he does as well as I expect, he will go higher and higher **every** year."

"God bless you, Mr. Ring," said the mother.

Margaret's face began to quiver.

"Come on, Jimmie. Good-by," and Mr. Ring, who disliked scenes, was out of the room and going down the stairs before another word could be said.

"Mr. Ring, did—did Margaret tell you about what I said?" asked Jimmie, as they reached the street.

"She did, my boy. But you have done penance. And I'm sure that, should you live a hundred years, nothing like that will ever again escape from your mouth."

"I think you are right, sir. I am cured of that sort of thing forever."

CHAPTER X.

*IN WHICH JIMMIE GLEASON TAKES A CARRIAGE RIDE,
AND FINDS A HOME.*

BRIGHTER days had come for the Gleasons. Jimmie was no longer a newsboy, but, as assistant secretary to Mr. Ring, holding a position which promised to be permanent. The hours of work

were short—from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon. Never did a boy enter with greater zest into a position of trust than Jimmie Gleason. He was proud of his promotion and determined that Mr. Ring should never regret the trust he had put in him.

He still smarted under the disgrace he had brought upon himself in his visit to Cyril, and, although he inquired earnestly after his friend's health, nothing could induce him to set foot in the house where he had behaved so ill.

One Monday morning, Jimmie came down to the office looking happier than usual.

"Some good news?" queried Mr. Ring, sententiously.

"The very best, sir. First of all, I hear that Cyril is able to go out."

"Yes; he takes a ride to-day. Where did you learn that?"

"I've got one of the fellers who lives in Avondale and belongs to our Sodality to keep tab of him, sir."

"Well, is that all?"

"No, sir; I've been made an officer in our Sodality. I don't feel fit for it, sir, but Father Nelson wouldn't let me out of it, and, besides, I reckon it will help me to behave myself better than I used to."

"Did you ask Father Nelson to get some one else in your place as officer?"

"Yes, sir. But he thrun—I mean, he threw a lot of bouquets at me."

"Yes?" said Mr. Ring, with an inflection in his voice which invited further confidence.

"Yes, sir. He said that he hoped great things of me; he said that I had had fine chances, and that he thought I would have sense enough to use them well."

"Father Nelson is right, I trust. He expects something of you, and so do I. Now, get to work, and finish with those papers as fast as you can. You must be free by two o'clock for some outside work."

On that day two o'clock came very swiftly. Jimmie was still hard at it copying, when a light hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned, and the pen dropped unnoticed from his hand. Beside him stood Cyril, wan of feature, but with the light of joy and love in his sunken eyes.

Jimmie's face grew red with shame, while his eyes brightened with delight. Altogether, his position was very embarrassing. But Cyril quickly relieved him.

"How are you, Jimmie? When the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain; and here I am, and here you are, and

there's a carriage down-stairs, and papa has given permission for you to come with me, and—and—get your hat and come."

Still somewhat dazed, Jimmie put away his papers, and, receiving an encouraging nod from Mr. Ring, who, meanwhile, had been whispering something very pleasant in Cyril's ear, he took the convalescent's arm, and helped him gently to the carriage.

It was a clear, cool day in late autumn. The street was bright and gay with sunlight and with people. Even the coachman upon the box, to Jimmie's eyes, looked jolly and happy. And so he was, for he, too, loved Cyril, as did all who enjoyed the acquaintance of that cheerful little man.

"Drive us through Clifton and back by way of Eden Park, Jack," cried the little master; and off they clattered before happy Jimmie Gleason could say a word.

"Did you get my letter, Cyril?"

"Of course I did; and I'd have answered it, too, only I was in hopes papa would persuade you to come out and see me. But why should you apologize? It was I that should have apologized. I showed worse manners than you did. When a man is surprised into making a slip of some sort, well-bred people should not notice it. You forgot yourself, and so did I. So we're even. And I

know, Jimmie, you didn't mean what you said. And now we've settled that little point for good and all."

"I never thought you'd take it that way, Cyril. I deserved to be kicked out of your house. When I left that night I thought that it was all over with me; and instead of that, your father gave me a splendid place, and has been treating me like a prince."

"And did you know, Jimmie, that he is delighted with you?"

"Is he really?"

"Yes; he says that you have a first-rate head for business. Two weeks from now he's going to raise your salary."

"How do you know?"

"That's what he told me just now. He says you can work as fast as boys of eighteen or nineteen."

"If that's so," said Gleason, reflectively, "we can begin to put by a little money."

"Papa told me you live in an ugly old tenement. Is that so?"

"Yes, it is ugly. That's a fact—it would be good for Margaret and Ellen and Mary if we could get a better place to live in. I never thought of that before."

"How much rent do you pay a month?"

"Nine dollars and a half."

"Wouldn't it be nice, Jimmie, if you could find a little house where you could all live together by yourselves?"

"Why," cried Jimmie enthusiastically, "that would be *home*."

For a short time there was silence. Both were busily thinking.

"Yes," said Jimmie aloud, "I think we can afford to spend more money on rent. I'll see mother about it to-night. Halloo!" he cried suddenly, as they were passing a corner where two car lines intersected, "look, Cyril, that's John Larkin. Halloo, John," he vociferated, putting his head out of the window.

The coachman, hearing the cry, and thinking that he was addressed, brought the horses to a halt. Larkin, who had been waiting for a car, stepped forward and caught Gleason's hand.

"Are you going towards Clifton?" asked Cyril.

"Yes."

"Won't you please jump in. I want to see you; Jimmie told me all about you."

The carriage door was thrown open and Larkin bounded in, the picture of health and agility.

"Cyril Ring, that's the man who taught me boxing and a lot of things. He's done me more good than—than anything, and——"

"Oh, I say, Jimmie, don't make me blush. I'm

glad to meet you, Cyril. Jimmie has told me all about you. As he says, he's a pupil of mine, and I'm proud of him. We began at boxing, but that was only the beginning. For the last two and a half months I've had him in my gymnasium class at the Sodality club-room, and now, barring strength and weight, he can do anything I can do, and a few things more. By the way, Jimmie, I'm offered a new place."

"What's that?"

"Trainer at the gymnasium at twelve hundred a year."

"Did you take it?"

"No, thank you. Now, if you were four years older, I could recommend you."

"Catch me leaving Mr. Ring!"

"By the way, Cyril, you seem to need a little building up. The youngster, your friend, there, is a born trainer. If you get him to take you in hand, he'll make a man of you in three months."

"That's just what I was going to ask Jimmie," said Cyril. "Papa and I were talking about it last night. Papa doesn't want me to go to school till February, and, in the meantime, he wants me to build up. Would you care to give me a course in gymnastics, Jimmie?"

"Would I care? Why, it will be just great. I never thought when I was a studyin' that I'd come

to be your teacher. It'll be fun for me, and, I hope, for you, too."

"You're going to be in good hands, Cyril. Young Gleason here is a marvel at all sorts of athletics. Sometimes I was afraid he'd run off and join a circus. Well, we're getting near where I want to go. Good-by, Cyril; I am very glad to have met you."

"Good-by, Mr. Larkin; any friend of Jimmie's is mine. I hope you'll call up some day and see me."

"Why, certainly; some time I'll come along with Jimmie, and find out how you're getting on."

Larkin struck the glass with his knuckles, and the driver stopped.

"Good-by, Jimmie; give my very best regards to all at home and—and to Margaret."

"I guess you'll see her soon enough to give 'em yourself. You come 'most every night," answered Jimmie demurely.

This remark left Larkin speechless.

The hour spent in driving through Clifton and Eden Park was one of the most delightful in Jimmie's experience. The lingering autumn had touched into beauty the dying of the year, so that, though passing away, it was passing in an ecstasy of loveliness.

Cyril, to whom these splendors of nature were

nothing new, was at pains to call his friend's attention to the choice bits of scenery; and he had a responsive listener.

On issuing from Eden Park, Cyril directed the driver to go to Pioneer Street.

"You know the house, Jack," he added.

The driver nodded intelligently.

"What are you going to Pioneer Street for, Cyril?" Gleason inquired.

"Never mind, Jimmie; you'll see in a minute."

This statement was not literally true. Something over five minutes passed before they drew up at a neat two-story house—the middle one of a row of three.

Cyril took a key from his pocket, and led the way. A pretty little veranda covered with creeping vines guarded the door.

"What do you think of these houses, Jimmie?"

"They're nice; they look very pretty."

"I'm glad you like them. All three are mine. Papa gave them to me a year ago. Two of them are rented at fifteen dollars a month. This one is not occupied at present."

"Gee! I'd like to rent it myself. But fifteen is a little high for us."

Cyril, meanwhile, had turned the key in the lock and thrown open the door.

"Come in and examine it," he said.

From the moment of their entrance to their leaving, Jimmie's conversation was limited mainly to three letters of the alphabet. When "oh" and "ah" failed to express his sentiments, he said "Gee."

"That front room upstairs would be just the thing for mamma and Mary. Then Margaret and Ellen could have the next room. My brother and I could live together in the room next the yard. I say, Cyril, as soon as your father gives me a raise, I'm going to see whether we can't afford to rent your house. Of course, I shall have to ask my mother's opinion."

"Your mother will be here in a minute, Jimmie. I sent John to bring her. The fact is, if it suits her and you, I've got a little plan for letting you have it right away. It's a very simple plan, too. Now you know, Jimmie, I'm not going to let you take me in hand and instruct me in athletics for nothing."

"I'll bet you are," put in Jimmie. "Why, that will be a pleasure to me."

"Yes; but I intend to use at least one hour of your time every day, and I won't have you at all unless you let me pay you. Papa and I talked about it last night, and we both settled on that; no pay, no instruction."

"But you're too good. I owe you a lot already, and I won't——"

"Oh, you've got to. That's all about it. Papa insists on payment, and so does my mother. Now, listen. According to all accounts, your work in teaching me ought to be worth at least seventy-five cents an hour. This will pay your rent for this house, and leave you a margin of about ten dollars over each month. What do you say to that?"

Jimmie reflected for some time.

"Suppose we compromise," he said at length. "I don't want your margin. Let us have the house for my work, and even then I'll feel that I have far the best of the bargain."

"Let's compromise the compromise, then," said Cyril, smiling. "Instead of giving you ten dollars over and above, suppose I make it five dollars? You needn't shake your head."

When Mrs. Gleason arrived, the two had already come to terms. It was for her to ratify the agreement.

"My little boy," she said, "you are giving us what your poor father's death took away—a home. God bless you. How proud of you he would be were he alive to-day! Indeed, indeed, God has blessed me in my children."

And thus began a new and brighter chapter in the history of the Gleasons

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH JOHN AND MARGARET SHOW WONDERFUL INSENSIBILITY TO THE COLD, AND A NEW YEAR BEGINS FOR THEM IN EARNEST.

It is a bitter cold day in winter some two years after the events related in the last chapter. The snow, sparkling in the glare of the electric lights—for the morning is still very young—lies hard and crisp upon the ground. It had fallen heavily during the previous night, and very few snow shovelers had as yet come out to clear the sidewalks.

Five o'clock Mass at St. Xavier's Church was over, and the forth-issuing crowd of worshippers quickly disappeared. For fifteen minutes or more there continued to come forth scattered groups of communicants, who had delayed to make their thanksgiving, until the church was well-nigh deserted. It was, in very deed, deserted, when lastly there issued from its ample portals six persons with whom the reader is more or less acquainted. The first couple were John Larkin and Margaret Gleason. Behind them came Jimmie and his mother, followed by Ellen and Mary.

"Happy New Year, mother; happy New Year, everybody," called Jimmie, as they reached the outermost door of the church.

His merry cry was caught up and re-echoed, with some trifling variations, by all.

John Larkin seemed to be rather unduly influenced by the apparent slipperiness of the steps. He assisted Margaret down the dangerous descent as though she were the very rarest specimen of Rookwood pottery. Not thus impressed were the others. In fact, they paid little or no regard to their personal danger to life and limb, so absorbed were they in observing with a tender and amused interest the thrilling downward progress of Margaret and John.

"Why don't you take her round by way of the sacristy and out the door of the pastor's residence?" suggested Jimmie; "there aren't near so many steps there as here. If you wish, I'll ring up for an ambulance."

No attention was paid to these profane suggestions. The party moved along Sycamore Street in the direction of Sixth.

I stated a moment ago that it was a cold day. The wind bit shrewdly as it passed, and sang a song of winter at the corners of the church. Men, pressing their gloved hands to their ears, were hurrying along with all the haste consistent with Sunday dignity and the condition of the pavements. Little boys, embarrassed by heavy bundles of papers, were dancing upon the snow-covered

earth and beating their arms energetically against their shoulders, forgetting in the intensity of the cold to cry out their wares. In a word, there could be no doubt in the mind of any sane and unprejudiced man that it was a very cold day indeed.

Nevertheless, there were two persons, turning on Sixth Street from Sycamore to Broadway that morning, who failed to appreciate the fact. These two were John and Margaret. The pace which they adopted would have lent courage to a snail. One might fancy, from their leisurely movements, that it was early spring, all beautiful with fragrant flowers and golden sunshine. The air might have been filled with sweet singing birds; though, I am bound to say, however full-throated the choir, they would not have heard so much as a single note, for they were listening to each other, and conversing with an earnestness which made them utterly deaf and dumb and blind to all things not themselves.

Master James Gleason, quickly taking in the situation, was all a grin. He was directly behind them, and, although he was blue with the cold, he hesitated for fully half a square as to the propriety of awakening them rudely from "love's young dream."

"I say, mother, aren't they a pair of young turtle doves? Do you know, I believe they'd let us freeze

to death, and would learn nothing about it till a week or so after our burial?"

"God bless them both," said Mrs. Gleason fervently. "There's not a better pair in the parish."

"Nor in the whole town, for that matter," added James.

"Isn't it sweet!" chattered Ellen, who could grow sentimental in the face of any weather.

"Yes; I reckon it is; in fact, just a little too sweet for my taste," answered James. "Of course, I've no objection to their enjoying themselves in their own fashion, so long as they do not interfere with the lives and liberties of the rest of the family. But, really, they are blocking the sidewalk; and unless something happens we shall freeze to death. I say, Larkin!"

But Larkin heard not his own name.

"Did you ever see the like of it?" grumbled Jimmie in an undertone to his mother. "I really believe that those two at their present rate of speed would not make a mile if they were to go on from now till sunset. Besides they have evidently forgot that we exist. Hey, Larkin! John Larkin!" he bawled.

Larkin started as one starts who has been rudely shaken from some dream or vision elysian.

"I—I beg your pardon. Did you call?" he said, trying vainly to look pleasant and interested.

"Did I call? Well, yes; I believe I did. If these streets were paved with gold instead of snow; and if the air were filled with sunshine instead of shivers, you two could not possibly enjoy your little walk more than you do. You seem to have a knack of knocking enjoyment out of any sort of weather. Of course, I don't want to hurry you, you know. If you people are really enjoying yourselves as much as you seem, mother and I and the girls are willing to go on freezing till further orders."

John and Margaret laughed, and, taking the hint, at once quickened their steps; indeed, with such alacrity did they proceed, that Ellen, who took an extravagantly cheerful view of things on this particular morning, averred that they were going at the rate of at least one mile an hour.

The conversation thus interrupted by James was presently renewed.

"Did you hear what Jimmie said just now, Margaret?"

"About our going so slow?"

"Oh, no; not that. He said something to the effect that all weathers were alike to us."

"Ah! Did he?"

"Yes, Margaret. And it's true, isn't it?"

"Well, it is a cold day," remarked Margaret, logically.

"What he said is true," insisted John, idiotically

unbuttoning his overcoat. "And, Margaret, if we live long enough, I dare say we shall meet with all kinds of weather in our life. Don't you think that all kinds of weather, wet, and cold, hot and dry, darkness and storm, and trouble and illness, would look more alike to us all the time, if—if——"

"Yes; it is *very* cold," said Margaret.

"Oh, bother the cold. Say, Margaret, shall we face it together—you and I—for life?"

Now, if Margaret had not become suddenly excited, she would certainly have turned aside from the main question by inquiring into the meaning of the little word "it" thus vaguely used by John Larkin. But she hesitated; she lost her head for the smallest fraction of a minute, and——

"By George!" cried Jimmie a moment later, "I believe it has come at last. Something has been going on out of the common, and it's just what I was expecting for the last three months."

"What are you talking about, and what were you expecting?" asked Mrs. Gleason.

"Larkin has gone and done it."

"Done what?"

"Proposed, mother; and Margaret has said 'yes.'"

Just then the leaders of this slow-moving procession having halted, John Larkin turned and addressed himself to Mrs. Gleason.

"Mrs. Gleason," he began, "I have some news for——"

"John," pleaded Margaret, attempting to put her hand over her stalwart escort's mouth.

"Gently, Margaret. Mrs. Gleason, I beg to announce——"

With a little shriek, Margaret put her hands before her face, and bolted for home. Uttering a whoop, Jimmie at once gave chase; Larkin, hurriedly remarking, "you know the rest," followed next; and what with the bracing air and the cold and the nature of the news, even the girls broke into a run, while Mrs. Gleason followed after at the briskest walk of which she was capable.

Beyond what has just been set down, no further announcement of the engagement was ever made by the parties chiefly concerned. The rest was understood.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH EVERY ONE IS HAPPY, AND THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE first day of the New Year has worn on to noon. Seated in the parlor, and with an eye upon the street—for they are expecting distinguished guests—are Mrs. Gleason, Jimmie, Mary, Ellen, Edward, and Earle. Margaret and John are pres-

ent, too, but they do not, like the others, seem to be waiting.

Earle is dressed with unusual care, induced to such effort by Jimmie, and is correspondingly uncomfortable. His shoes are so highly polished that he is fain to contemplate them at length; but a very high collar holds him in bondage, and, for the first time in his life, he holds his head high in air.

Edward has been awed into stillness by the wearing of a new and tasty suit of clothes, made doubly impressive by a tie which is a marvel of brilliant colors. Margaret and John are conversing together, oblivious apparently of space and time. The others are not quite so much at their ease; they are waiting. The younger ones are fast waxing impatient. And why should they not? A tempting odor comes from the kitchen, and they are tantalized by a vision, so near and yet so far, of the dining-room, bright and cheery, and hinting of flowers and feasting.

While the company is thus waiting, let us retrace briefly the history of the past two years.

The new house has indeed proved to be a home. Mrs. Gleason has done everything to make it pleasant and attractive to her children. Pioneer Street is a quiet and pretty little harbor, situated modestly but just the least little bit aside from the rush and roar of down-town life. The houses are

for the most part well kept; and their inhabitants embrace among their number some of the very nice people of St. Xavier's parish. Yet for neatness and attractiveness there was no house in all the cheerful length of the square to surpass the home of our happy family. Every month has witnessed some improvement in its appointments, until at the opening of this new year of grace, it is a home which for neatness and simplicity leaves nothing to be desired. In consequence of this and of the new and better circle of acquaintance into which they have been thrown, Ellen and Mary are changed girls—so changed, indeed, that those who knew them in other years cannot but wonder. What their present home is to their tenement lodgings, so are they to their former selves. Mother, and Margaret, and Jimmie have won the day. Thanks to the change, the better has prevailed over the worse.

As for Earle, he is half respectable, which is all that can be expected of that interesting young man. He has no ambition, no desire to rise to higher things. But while he does not rise, the Sodality and the presence of Jimmie, whom he unwillingly recognizes as his lord and master, prevent him from being submerged. He has a wholesome fear of his athletic cousin, and that fear is the beginning and the end of his wisdom.

Edward is developing well. He is a student and a reader. Like Jimmie, he is a weekly communicant. He attends St. Xavier College, and is a member of the Acolythical Society. One of the joys of his mother's heart is to see her little boy in the sanctuary. It is the secret prayer and the secret hope of all, that God may one day call the little fellow to the high and holy vocation of the priesthood. Judging by his piety, his modesty, and his love of study, the wish is neither extravagant, nor is its fulfilment improbable.

Jimmie himself has grown wondrously. The youthfulness of his face alone shows that he has not yet come to man's estate. But in every other sense he is a man; a man in judgment, in strength, in ability, in energy, in work. During the past few months he has served on trial as Mr. Ring's private secretary. The trial has abundantly proved his fitness, and on the morrow he enters permanently upon the duties of this position at a salary which puts the family on an assured and comfortable footing. There is no longer need for Ellen to earn her bread; she is experiencing for the first time in many years, poor girl, the blessedness of the home life.

Jimmie's endeavors to develop the health and the muscles of Cyril Ring proved to be quite successful. The sickly little fellow, under his prudent

care and watching, improved perceptibly week after week, and, long before the roses came the flower of health bloomed blushing upon his cheek. When he returned to St. Maure's in the following March, he was in perfect health; and, it may be added, in the field day he carried off the honors of the Junior department.

Cyril's return to college, however, did not deprive Jimmie of the little revenue which went towards paying the rent of the house on Pioneer Street. Cyril had advertised the merits of his trainer so well among his young friends of Avondale that previous to his departure a class of twelve little boys presented themselves to Jimmie for the same course. In consequence of this addition to his income, Jimmie, besides laying by a goodly sum of money each month, was able to withdraw Margaret from her position as regular stenographer (though she still, at the earnest solicitation of the firm, gave two hours daily to them), and to send her to receive private lessons at the Sixth Street Academy.

Although Cyril and Jimmie are no longer together, they keep up a frequent and fervent correspondence. Cyril has more than repaid Jimmie for his physical training; he has become his sturdy friend's literary guide. Under his direction young Gleason is acquiring a healthy taste and a healthy knowledge of literature. This improvement bids

fair to go on faster than ever; for now that Jimmie has become Mr. Ring's secretary, he purposes giving but three nights to his class in physical culture, and to devote the other four to study and reading.

It goes without saying that he is still a member of the boys' Sodality. For the past six months he has been prefect, and wields an influence which Father Nelson declares to be simply incalculable. Experience and effort and observation have worn off his rough corners, and he is frankly recognized as the leading "big boy" of the parish.

Meantime, we have left the family group in waiting.

"Here they are," cried Jimmie exultingly, just as the chimes of St. Xavier's rang out the first quarter after the noon hour.

There was a clatter of wheels and of horses' hoofs, and Jack, the coachman, brought his spirited horses to a halt before the door.

The words were not well out of Jimmie's mouth, when he darted from the room, and, before the coachman could dismount was assisting the guests from the carriage.

Cyril, stout and rosy and smiling, needed no help. He was followed by his father and mother, who were indeed happy to have their dear little St. Maure's boy with them for a few days.

"Why, Cyril," cried Jimmie, almost hugging

him, for Cyril had just reached home that morning, "you look splendid."

"I feel that way, Jimmie. I got permission from our president to come all the way from St. Maure's to congratulate you. I had to tell him the whole story before he would allow it. He's a trump."

"He's anything good you can call him," assented Jimmie with enthusiasm. "Welcome back to Cincinnati. How are you, Mr. Ring? Happy New Year, Mrs. Ring; you do not know how glad I am to have you here with us. But I'm so glad to see Cyril that I can't show any other feeling. It's like old times to see him again."

"I feel as good as if I were getting two Christmases in one week, Jimmie."

It was a happy party that met under that simple roof-tree. There was much talk and much laughter, and not a little joking. The jests, it is hardly necessary to add, were, for the most part, directed at Margaret and John, who, being very joyous, were brave to admiration.

Towards the end of the meal Mr. Ring arose.

"My friends," he said, "I know that I am expected to say something. In fact I had thought out a little speech, suitable, as I believed, for the occasion, on the way here; but I now find that my little speech won't do. I was going to say a word or two about my new private secretary, in whose

honor we are gathered together; but the events of the morning have put him in the background; have, indeed, sent him into a sort of eclipse. The only subject of interest, here and now, is the engagement of Mr. John Larkin and Miss Margaret Gleason."

It was Jimmie who started the warm applause.

"Never mind us, Mr. Ring," pleaded John Larkin. "We're happy enough. Please to turn your little speech full on the youngster. Hit him hard."

"Yes, do, Mr. Ring," added Margaret.

"Well, since you will have it, so be it. After all, my young lady and my young gentleman, it is due to Jimmie that Margaret may, with a clear conscience and a light heart, leave her venerable mother. Jimmie is now the head of the family. There was a time, and that not so very long ago, when such was not the case. There was a time when Margaret was the heroine and the breadwinner. She is a heroine yet."

"Hear, hear!" cried Larkin.

"Later, there came a time when it was hard to say who held the honors. But now the question is no longer in doubt. Jimmie is the head of the family, and God grant he may remain so for many and many a happy, happy year.

"I have known my private secretary since he was a newsboy. I knew him when it was doubtful

as to which way he would go—upwards or downwards. It was just then, just at the parting of the ways that I said something to him about the Christian gentleman. Beyond that, I said, if I remember right, there was little or nothing in this world. I need not say that thus far he has striven to be a gentleman and a Christian. Step by step, he has risen higher. One step and then another; one step and then another; such is the history of Jimmie Gleason for the last two years. There are more steps, and the way will not always be smooth. But a brave heart travels where a coward heart faints. Nor need we face the far off future. Before us lies the New Year. That is enough. Face it boldly, my boy. A happy, happy New Year to you and to all.”

“‘One step and then another, and the longest lane is ended,’” quoted Jimmie.

“And,” added Mr. Ring, “be they long or short, may the end of each our lanes be heaven.”

THE BOY WHO KNEW IT ALL.

"YOU'RE a doctor, ain't you, sir?" inquired the small boy, as he threw open the front door and fixed his eyes upon a middle-aged man with a closely trimmed beard.

"Yes; but——"

"I knew it," cried the little fellow clasping his hands and giving a skip for very joy; "and what's more, I know who sent you."

"The deuce you do!" exclaimed the doctor, the stern character of his expression changing into a lively and unprofessional astonishment.

"Yes, sir, I do. You were sent here by St. Joseph to cure my mamma."

"Is that so? Now, I was under the——"

"Yes," broke in the boy, too eager to listen; "and you're welcome; come right along"—here he took the physician's hand in his own—"and I'll show you something worth seeing."

If the doctor then and there had discovered America he could not have looked more amazed

as the youthful guide conducted him into the parlor and cried jubilantly:

"Now, just look at that, will you?"

The parlor was wretchedly furnished, and, although it was Christmas eve, not at all Christmas-like in its general appearance; but the shabby appointments of the room were unnoticed by the doctor; both he and his guide were staring with the liveliest interest upon a group of packages lying on the uncarpeted floor.

"Turkey!" cried the boy unctuously, touching the biggest package with a caressing hand.

"Ham!" he continued, touching another.

"Oranges!" he went on, opening a plethoric paper bag. "Won't you take one, sir?"

The doctor, meanwhile, looked as if he had not yet got over discovering America. At the question he recovered himself a trifle, and said:

"Are those your oranges, sonny?"

"Oh, I'm rude; I should have told you my name, sir. It's Joe—Joe Willis. Why, of course these oranges are mine; so's the turkey; so's the ham; everything is mine—that wine packed in hay with silver round the cork, and all those nuts and raisins, and those bananas and apples and figs—they're all mine. They're a Christmas present to me. Do you know who it was that made me a present of them?"

"Who, pray?" asked the doctor, with a touch of sarcasm, which was quite lost on Joe Willis.

"St. Joseph, sir."

"Well," cried the physician, placing his tall hat and heavy gloves on the table, "this is quite beyond anything in all my experience, professional or otherwise."

"Did St. Joseph tell you to come himself, sir?" continued young Willis sympathetically, for he perceived that the doctor was troubled. After all, it might be hard on the nerves to encounter a saint.

"Tell me how St. Joseph came to send you all these groceries, my little man."

"Here's the way it happened, sir—sit down."

The doctor took a chair, and Joe squatted beside the turkey.

"Well, it happened this way: Towards the last part of November mamma took sick just when she got some fancy needlework, and then, of course, she had to let it go. Then my oldest sister—Mabel's her name—had to stay home to take care of ma. My papa's been dead over a year. Now, I'm too little to work, and my other two sisters are too young for any use, and so my older brother Tom, who is fifteen, had to try to support the family all by himself. Of course, Tom couldn't do it, and ma didn't get better, and Christmas was coming near, and I didn't just see how we'd do about

having a Christmas dinner. And then, sir, I thought I'd make a new vena to St. Joseph."

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir. Sister Gerina, who teaches me, said more than once that if we ever wanted something right bad we should go to St. Joseph, and he'd be sure to hear us, if the things we asked for was all right. Well, then I started a new vena, and I prayed for all I was worth for a good Christmas dinner, especially turkey and oranges—just look at that turkey and those oranges, and the bottles with the corks done up in silver, peeking out of the hay! Well, sir, I just prayed till both my knees got sore. I'll show 'em to you if you——"

"Go on with your story, I am interested," said the doctor, whose face had softened wondrously.

Joe relinquished his hold on the upper part of his stocking, straightened up, and went on:

"To-day is Christmas eve, and the last day of the new vena, and this morning I started in to pray just as if I was beginning. A little before dinner-time, ma, who had been sick right along, got much worse, and my sister wanted to get a doctor; but ma was afraid of the expense, I reckon, and said no. Then I went at St. Joseph again; and do you know what I told him? I said that I was willing to give up the turkey and oranges and candy if he would only send a good doctor to cure mamma, and while

I was praying the bell rang, and there was a grocer's boy with his wagon. I had been expecting him, and as he came in I told him to bring the things in the parlor quietly, so that the folks wouldn't know anything about it. You see, I wanted to give them a surprise. The grocer's boy was a jolly fellow with a silver watchchain. Then I felt sure that St. Joseph meant to send a doctor, too; so I've been waiting for you ever since, and it's over two hours. If you don't want an orange, you might as well come along and see my mother right away."

Again looking as though he had just discovered America, the doctor suffered himself to be conducted up the stairway into a small room.

"St. Joseph has sent a doctor to cure you, mamma."

The mother was in bed. Her daughter Mabel, who was bending tenderly over her, raised her sad eyes at these words, and then she, too, looked as though she were taking a part in the discovery of the Western Continent.

"The boy is right," muttered the physician, under his breath, as he stooped beside the bed and fixed his eyes full on the woman's face.

He was one of those gifted doctors who seem to take in the nature of a case at a glance. A light hand upon the woman's pulse, a touch upon the

brow, a raising of the lids and a glance into the eyes—and the doctor knew his ground.

"Little boy," he said gravely, "St. Joseph has sent me in the nick of time. Your mother, my girl," he added, drawing Mabel away from the bedside, "would probably be beyond a doctor's skill within twenty-four hours. But now I see my way to breaking her fever before noon to-morrow. Now, my girl, I'm off to get some medicine at once. I must also send a message to my family to let them know that I shall be away all night in order to save my patient."

Taking no notice of the girl's broken words of thanks, he hastened from the room and down the stairs. A light patter came echoing after him.

"Say, doctor," cried Joe, half-way down the staircase, "can't I come along?"

"Come on," said the doctor, not unkindly.

In front of the house a wagon had just come to a stand behind the doctor's gig—the same wagon that had brought the Christmas dinner—and in it, not looking at all jolly, sat the same grocer's boy.

Joe would have run over to greet him as an old friend, but the doctor interposed.

"Wait a minute," he said; "I want to speak to him privately."

"Look here," said the doctor, addressing the de-

jected grocer's boy, "where were you told to bring that order of mine?"

"To 2418 Gamble Street, sir; that's the house, sir. That boy there met me at the door, and said he'd been expecting me. Here's my orders as I put 'em down in my book. Doctor William Wilkins, 2418 Gamble— O-o-o-oh!"

"Exactly," said the doctor, "it's 2418 Gamble Avenue, not Gamble Street. Just as soon as your clerk told me the goods had been delivered I began to think. On my road to a patient I happened to pass Gamble Street, and it flashed on me that as like as not I might find my order at number 2418. And so I did."

"You beat me here. Jerusalem! we've made an awful blunder," cried the grocer's boy, in the name of the firm.

"Not a blunder," corrected the customer, "but a mistake."

"Oh!" said the grocer's boy, looking doubtful.

"You needn't bother, though, about taking those things back. Just duplicate the first order and bring the things to Gamble Avenue this time. The order you brought here by mistake will do for a patient of mine in this house from St. Joseph."

"St. Joseph, Missouri, sir?" asked the grocer's boy, innocently.

For answer the doctor slipped a dollar into the other's hand.

"A merry Christmas to you," he explained.

How the grocer's boy brightened.

"Same to you, sir," he answered. "No, it wasn't a blunder, I see that. I hope, sir, your patient from St. Joe will have a merry Christmas, too. Good-by, little man," he cried out to Joe, who, while regaling himself with nuts and raisins, was smiling and dancing on the steps.

"Merry Christmas to all 'us," yelled Joe; and seeing that the secret interview was over, he pattered down and placed his little hand most confidently in the doctor's.

"Little boy," he said, "you may be very young, but really and truly you seem to know it all." There was a moisture in the good man's eye as he spoke, but Joe did not care to understand—to the eye of faith there are few mysteries.

Although the doctor passed a sleepless and an anxious night beside the sick woman, I am glad to say that his efforts were successful beyond belief, and, as a result, Joe and mamma and doctor and Mabel and Tom and the two little sisters all spent the merriest kind of a Christmas.

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